Beyond Survival: Bright Ideas in Dark Times

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Part 1: Intro & Overview

Why this topic, why now?

- Library use going up, budgets going down
- National attention
- LSA focus for coming year
- Prime opportunity to frame this message

(with thanks to Bonnie McKewon for the next few slides)
Overview of Resources—Websites

- ALA “Advocating in a Tough Economy Toolkit”
  http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/index.cfm

- WebJunction “Focus on Libraries in Tough Economic Times”
  http://www.webjunction.org/toughtimes

- Online Resources for Libraries & Job Seekers

- Wisconsin Initiative “Jobs Start @ Your Library”
  http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/lstajobs.html

- Library Service Areas “Help in Tough Times” website
  http://www.ilsa.lib.ia.us/helpintoughtimes/
Resources—Social Networking

- ILMS “Libraries to the Rescue” podcast series
  www.imls.gov/resources/podcasts_Jun09.shtmlraries

  http://www.webjunction.org/toughtimes

- Tough Times Blog
  http://helpintoughtimes.blogspot.com/

- Tough Times Twitter
  http://twitter.com/helpintoughtime
Resources—Books & Articles


• From Awareness to Funding: A Study of Library Support in America. OCLC, c2008

Books & Articles cont…

• Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2007-2008. ALA, c2008


• “Public Libraries: Necessities or Amenities?” American Libraries, Aug-Sept 2009
A Quick Tour

A few current realities
  – Our challenges
  – Their challenges

Our solutions – a few creative ideas
  – Technology
  – Collection Development
  – Programming
  – Partnerships
Our challenges

Library budget cuts put book borrowing at risk

Ohio Governor’s Budget Would Slash Library Funding 30% More

Lexington Public Library to cut budget

Library budget cut significantly

Philadelphia libraries to close Oct. 2

Pennsylvania’s budget deadlock also means 3,000 city employees could get pink slips on Friday.

New York City’s Three Library Systems Face 22% Budget Cut

Queens Library, Brooklyn PL, and New York PL Would Lose Weekend Service

- 943 employees would be laid off
- Many branches would offer no weekend service
- City Council must approve budget by June 30

No justification for budget cuts to library system
Our challenges

Recession sees increase in library use
Published Date: 11 September 2009

Library use rises as economy falls
Books, computers in demand

Library usage up in wake of recession

Library use jumps in Seattle area; economy likely reason
At the King County Library System and the Seattle Public Library, circulation is up — way up.

Library Use is Booming Because of Recession
by Michael Graham Richard, Ottawa, Canada on 01. 5.09

Recession: A Mixed Blessing for Libraries
© 8/1/2008 11:53:47 AM

At Everett’s Parkin Memorial Library, Melissa Farfan picks movies with daughter Sarah, 4. (David Kanermissen/Globe Staff)
By John Ladier
Globe Correspondent / October 18, 2008

Library use rises as recession deepens
Budgets — so far — remain stable

Economic recession and library use

Library Use Has Skyrocketed with Recession

June 15, 2009
Posted on August 6, 2008 by scottahlibraries
Their challenges

They’ve cut their Internet access
They never had Internet to begin with
They’ve decided not to replace their printer
They’ve lost their job(s)
They have to apply for jobs – online!
They need email to apply for jobs online
They need job training – online
Their employer requires training - online
Their challenges

They can’t afford to take kids to the zoo, dance classes, tae kwon do, etc. like they used to.

They have to watch their remaining retirement investments, but can’t afford those expensive investment research tools.

They need to learn to create a budget – perhaps for the first time.

They want to apply for government assistance, and have never done such a thing before.
Their challenges

They’re buying or selling their home
They’re facing foreclosure and have to figure out their options.
They’re fixing up their home instead of selling
They’re thinking of renting their home/garage/spare room and need to know the legal ramifications
They’ve decided to go back to school
They’ve decided to start a new business
Their challenges

It’s all just a bit too much to cope with, and they need a good book/movie/audio to escape into
Why Should We Care?

“Unfortunately, I think it's safe to assume, given the economy, that it's going to get worse before it gets better"

[Lexington KY Public Library] board treasurer Richard Browning
What Can We Do?

Some Areas Open to Creative Response:

– Technology
– Collection Development
– Programming
– Partnerships
Technology Ideas

Grants to get additional Internet stations?
Dedicated station for resume/job research?

– My friend Robin’s story: “My library [Missouri River Regional Library] just won a grant [that I wrote]…to get 3 computers to put on special topic reference tables. One of the tables we are planning is a career resources table with access to the OptimalResume database included (actually, everyone will have access, but the grant is paying for it so we are pushing it on that particular computer). It's sort of a new thing we are offering for job-seekers”
“In our new building we have 24 internet computers, compared to 5 in our old building. People of all ages use them for recreation, communication, school work, job searches, etc.

When we first opened in December, people must not have known how many computers were available (or it was too close to the holidays or too cold or whatever), so usage was minimal.

Now it's common for all computers to be busy and people waiting to get on. So you could say we increased the number of internet computers so we could better serve those who don't have computers at home.”

--Monica, Marshalltown PL
Technology Ideas

Basic computer skills classes
– If you don’t have the staff, can you find or partner with local community education or Rotary group to find (free) instructors?

Online test prep software services (Learning Express)
Technology Ideas

Your Current Setup:

Internet station time/print management system – how are you using?

– Too restrictive?
– Could adding such a system increase feeling of “fairness”
– Can you set aside offline machine with longer time limit for folks working on resumes?
Technology Ideas

Wi-Fi – are you making it truly available?

– “[Milwaukee PL director Paula] Kiely likes to share her experience: While driving home after work one day, she saw a young man with a laptop sitting against an outside wall of a closed Milwaukee branch library. He was able to tap in to Wi-Fi even though he was outside the building. He powered his computer by plugging it into an exterior electrical socket, she said. … ‘It shows that people are rediscovering the value of their library’” (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 1/21/09)
This is SMALL but meant a lot to our patrons. We REDUCED the price of online printing from .25 to .10/page for black and white. We kept the color printing/copies at .25/page.

We also give out file folders for those patrons needing to carry their copies home, and we GIVE away ear buds to people who don't have earphones to use in the library.

Instead of charging $1/page for all faxes, if the no. is an 800# then the faxing is FREE!! Libraries are still FREE!!

As for the "why"----several factors entered into our decisions. Our ... new librarian thought the charges too steep considering the economic times. We knew that we had done the right thing when the patrons began copying health info, etc. right and left off the internet. This was definitely a NEEDED change. I couldn't KEEP enough paper in the printers!

--Vicki Christensen, Director, Anita Public Library
Collection Development Ideas

From *Newsweek* 4/6/09, written by Eva Gronowska, a librarian from Southfield (MI) Public Library

“… Then there's the tightening credit market. People see the writing on the wall and they want to get educated. They can't afford a financial adviser, but checking books out is free. Some of the most popular titles now are *Rich Dad, Poor Dad, Think and Grow Rich*, and *Suze Orman's 2009 Action Plan*.”
Collection Development Ideas

Budgeting materials – books and software help – Suze Orman, “Rich Dad”, etc.
Investment tracking – materials, websites, databases (Value Line, Morningstar)
Small business – writing business plans, budgets, QuickBooks manuals, links to state and federal help websites (grants, loans, etc.), small biz management
Collection Development Ideas

- Home canning, freezing, crock pot and other money-saving food books/websites
- Composting, vegetable growing, etc.
- Home buying/selling/foreclosure information – make sure it’s up-to-date! Ask county/state housing for materials?
- Iowa legal info for landlords/tenants
- Building code info for home renovations
- DIY home renovation materials
- Cooking with kids
Collection Development Ideas

Keep up your DVD collection – YOU are now their Blockbuster/Netflix!

– Mike and Sabrina Bonus were planning their evening of entertainment in the expansive DVD section of the Waukesha Public Library last week. The young couple visit the library often to cut expenses because Mike Bonus' manufacturing job, which he found while using a library computer, was cut to 32 hours a week. "They let us check out five movies, so I figure we're saving maybe $20 to $25," Mike Bonus said. In his grasp were three DVDs of the "Best of the Three Stooges." (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 1/21/09)

Audiobooks – stressed commuters can’t take the news anymore!
Programming Ideas

Job Searching Workshops
- Resume writing
- Interview skills – best as hands-on workshop with feedback
- Partner with local community colleges, economic development or business groups to find instructors and materials

Can you expand Youth or Children’s programming options?
- Families struggling to still provide activities for kids and youth, but need free/low-cost options
- Work with local Parks & Rec or Community Education
“Mason City Public Library is starting an outdoor free movie night on Saturdays during the Summer. We are hosting it at our Bandshell in East Park. It's a way to start some "No Money Fun" events.

We are going to start a "plant exchange". You dig up plants that need to be split or excess bulbs and bring them to the Library, others who need them can take them for free. For example, I split several hosta plants in my yard and brought them in. They were gone by the end of the day.

For advertising, I send out press releases and we have slides on the public access channel. I have a monthly spot on one of the radio stations in town too.

We are offering a service to repair discs. For $2.00 we will repair DVD's and C.D's that are scratched. Our machine will repair everything but a deep gouge. “

--Mary Markwalter, Mason City Public Library
"We wanted to do something to help the citizens of Troy through these tough times," said Stan Kegley, project manager for the city of Troy. "With the grant from the Troy Foundation, and with the help of area businesses and organizations, we will be offering a comprehensive program on overcoming the economic obstacles so many are facing today. We want businesses in Troy to succeed and feel this is one way we can help."

"Workshops will focus on helping business owners and individuals make better financial decisions during a down economy. In addition, the library is ordering several hundred books on business-related and personal finance topics as well as on job-seeking and resume preparation."
Overcoming Economic Obstacles

Seminars to help businesses and individuals Overcome Economic Obstacles are now underway at Troy-Miami County Public Library, thanks to a grant from the Troy-Foundation awarded to the City of Troy and the library.

Workshops have already begun and are scheduled throughout fall. They will be held at the library. The final series of workshops includes:

- Business Planning for the Small Company from 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12, with Dayton SCORE
- How to Find Employment in These Difficult Times at noon Sept. 22 with Justin Sommers, Workforce Development Coordinator for Miami County
- How to Search for Government Jobs at 6 p.m. Sept. 29 with LaKeisha Reed from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base
- Accounting for the Small Business at 10 a.m. Oct. 10 with Dayton SCORE
- Financing/Refinancing a Business in Today's Economy from 6-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 3, with Jerry Alexander of the Small Business Development Center at Edison Community College
- Business Start-Up Basics at 10 a.m. Nov. 14 with Dayton SCORE
- Marketing for the Small Business at 10 a.m. Dec. 12 with Dayton SCORE
“We teamed up with Marshalltown Community College to offer three free 2-hour Career Assistance presentations at the library. Sandy from the Career and Employment Center came on the scheduled date in April and one person stopped by. No one signed up for the May and June sessions, so Sandy cancelled them. We're not sure if it's the format or that people can't just stop in anytime during the 2-hour time frame or that the publicity didn't target the people who really need it. The Career Assistance presentations will be included in the Iowa Valley Continuing Education catalog for the fall session and will again be offered at the library.”

-- Monica, Marshalltown Public Library
Programming Ideas

Budgeting – Chicago suburban libraries using outside vendor on “SuperCouponing”

She has dates at other libraries too. http://www.supercouponing.com/
The Mary Barnett Memorial Library started 2009 by declaring it the year of "Home Grown-Hand Made". We have been providing sessions every month along these lines. The process has been advertised through our local cable station, on the local radio community billboard, and through many articles in our local paper.

Some of the classes provided are:
Learning cribbage and bridge, basket making, planning a garden, preserving berries, preserving garden crop, knitting, crocheting, container gardening preserving peonies, coin collecting, book club, calligraphy, genealogy classes and workshops, buying a computer, hemming and replacing zippers, doing Christmas letters on computer, electronic gadgets, quilting, making Christmas decorations Festival of Trees with theme "Home Grown-Hand Made", credit for women...

…and we're still working on it. Most of the classes are free.

It has been a lot of fun and people seem to appreciate the opportunities.

--Pat Sleister, Director, Mary Barnett Memorial Library, Guthrie Center
“I am an adult services librarian at Spokane County [WA] Library District. After the economic nose-dive last year, I had the idea to hold financial workshops at one of the libraries. I contacted a local nonprofit organization here in Spokane, Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP). They agreed to present a series of three information workshops: money management, understanding credit, and your credit report.”

[Carlie Hoffman, Spokane County [WA] Library District]
Partnerships

Local businesses
  – who is hiring? Job fair at the library?

Local organizations
  – Economic development – municipality, Rotary
  – Workforce development (job skills, interview skills, job search resources)
  – Small business development organizations
Partnerships

For college libraries, your college’s career development department

– Resume writing
– Interview skills
– Job searching tips
– Internship information

Public/college/school library partnerships – cross those lines!
Share Your Ideas!

What have you been inspired to do / change / add / revisit?
The Conversation Continues…

Catch the 3rd Annual
Iowa Small Libraries Online Conference
January 21, 2010
“Lemons to Lemonade:
Libraries Surviving & Thriving in Tough Times”
Thank You!

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