Adult Services Librarian Report

WLA

I attended WLA the first month of November, courtesy of a scholarship from OWLS. I attended 6 sessions on varying topics, some of which ended up relevant to the Kaukauna Library.

Landlord Tenant Law Resources

Occasionally, I help patrons find housing at the library. Most often, they don't have the technology skills necessary to navigate the internet to find available housing. I thought it would be beneficial to be able to offer them general renting resources in addition to teaching them how to find places to rent.

Evictions are more time sensitive than many reference topics librarians encounter. An eviction must go through multiple phases before it is finalized: Notice, Filing, Hearing, Judgment, and Eviction. It is vital to offer patron's resources during the Notice phase, ideally getting the landlord and tenant talking to avoid continuing on to the other phases. In addition to eviction help, patrons may seek general renting knowledge or rental assistance. Our job as librarians is to connect tenant with resources that can meet these needs without giving legal advice.

Resources:

- AARP or United Way Tax preparers may be able to help patrons fill out legal forms.
- Outagamie Clerk of Courts Resource Page.
- Just Shelter keeps a list of housing assistance, legal aid, tenant rights, and educational resources for each state.
- Legal Action of Wisconsin's Eviction Defense Project is focused on Dane and Milwaukee counties, but provides helpful starting points.
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has a Help for Renters section.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has a section on Rental Assistance
- The Wiscap website offers resources for Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance Program funds that are still available.
- The Wisconsin Law Library website has resources for the Green Bay Eastern District of Wisconsin which Outagamie County is in.

I will link to most of these resources on the Adult Resources page of the library's website.

State of DPI

There are many new things happening in the Library Services division of DPI. They just finished a comprehensive evaluation by WiLS, who noted many things Library Services does well, but mentioned they could improve their service in a few ways. First, the team could do a better job at communicating what Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds at DPI. This is a federal program that funds many of the operations of the library services team. Second, WiLS recommended that the team be more systematic with their data collection, particularly when concerning the end users and patrons. Finally, WiLS recommended conceptually shifting the team's existing Community Engagement and Inclusive Services to a lens to view their work through, rather than being a goal itself, as it currently is.

In addition, Library Services has a 5 year plan in place that libraries can look forward to. They are planning to improve access to information on their website and databases and have commissioned a Database Inventory and Needs Assessment Study, the results of which will be released soon, though they did mention they will offer access to newspapers in 2023 and new databases in 2024. Also part of their plan is the addition of an Internet Discount Finder on their website which is set to launch in early 2023.

They are also planning on providing services that support library staff directly. They are working on a professional learning calendar that will join all the continuing education systems in the state, complete with days of significance on it. It will likely be on OWLS or DPI's website when finished. The Library Services team is working on providing intellectual freedom resources to librarians in light of the recent increase in book challenges. A study will also be conducted examining how librarians use data from DPI, so that both the library data reporting process may be easier, as well as the ease of interpreting the data. Additionally, they have just begun working with the Wisconsin System Resource Library Administrators to complete a compensation study of library staff. This is estimated to be completed by June 30th 2023. Finally, it remains their goal to reduce the number of library system in Wisconsin. The recent success of the Lakeshore and Arrowhead library systems will inform recommendations for future library systems.

Navigating Legal Reference Questions

This session stressed that library staff should be very careful to avoid accidentally engaging in the unauthorized practice of law. Most librarians know they cannot give legal advice, but this session pointed out that even something as simple as giving an opinion on which legal form to fill out, or answering the question, "Is this everything I need?" qualifies as the unauthorized practice of law.

Best practices to avoid the unauthorized practice of law are as follows.

- Staff should provide resources to patrons in the form of guides, if available. Many legal resources have created guides that can answer questions that librarians cannot.
- Librarians should provide legal forms as specific to their county as possible.
- Staff can also provide sample forms of a type that matches the legal form the patron is requesting. These are also commonly available on law library websites.

- Use phrases like "the law states", "in general", or "I understand". Do not comment on a patron's situation with phrases like "That's terrible that happened to you", "It's going to be ok", or "That's not fair".
- Don't tell a patron that a law does or doesn't exist. If you look up laws for a particular subject and don't see the law, give the patron the source you used to determine if a law exists themselves.
- Staff can email or call the State Law Library to refer patrons for more help. They have a hand out they give to patrons.

Badgerlink for Library Staff

DPI offered this session to keep librarians informed regarding the current resources on Badgerlink, as well as what they have planned for the future.

Badgerlink features a page on their website titled For Library Staff that provide marketing resources, resource guides, training materials, programming ideas, and a form to request training. It appears that many librarians didn't use the page, so they spent time explaining that these resources were available for library staff to utilize. They recommend that libraries do not link to Badgerlink's homepage, because there are too many options for patrons to get lost or confused with. Instead, link to one of the resources guides or directly to the database or resource whenever possible. On June 30th 2024 Badgerlink databases will expire and switch to a procurement model. DPI is planning a needs assessment study to inform this process.

The library links to many resources, and I will review the website to see if there is an opportunity to link to their resource guides in addition to the resources itself.

Programming

I recently met with the Heart of the Valley Chamber of Commerce to discuss collaboration possibilities. We hosted their business card exchange here on November 10th. It was well attended by just shy of 30 people.

Chad Lewis presented on Tuesday, November 15th to an eager crowd of just under 20 people. The library hopes to have him back during October next year.

Library programming through May has been finalized and we will be offering new educational opportunities for adults via a few presentations from the Bureau of Consumer Protection, an educational series via a partnership with St. Paul Elder Services on Alzheimer's as it relates to those with the disease as well as their caregivers, a coffee and conversation program with the Kaukauna Police Department, various partner programs with 1,000 Islands, and a Puzzle Palooza competition where participants race to see which team can put together a 500 piece puzzle the fastest! I will also continue my technology classes here at the library as well as at various assisted living and senior centers in the community.

Library Event and Room Management Software

I have narrowed down the possibilities for a new library event and room management software solution and have been testing the features of the software for the past week. Pending another week of testing and a presentation to library staff, we should hopefully be able to have the new software live on our website by the new year. The software has so far proven to be easier for staff to use, require less data entry, and allow for greater customization.