

FOUNDATIONS

Wyoming Library

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Endowment spreadsheet updated to reflect increased funding

It was a quiet April for the library endowment, with only one match payment issued by the State Auditor after a flurry of activity in March. Wyoming libraries have collectively raised almost \$1.9 million and are a mere \$400,000 and change from getting the full incentive funding paid out.

There's more money to be had – an additional \$3 million appropriated by the State Legislature gives each library an additional \$130,435, bringing the available match up to \$426,087 per county. The \$100,000 in incentive money brings that total to more than half a million. The [endowment status spreadsheet](#) on the Wyoming Library Association website has been updated to show these new totals.

Are library book sales required to charge sales tax?

Library Friends and Foundations often hold book sales to raise funds. But are these sales subject to state sales tax? Wyoming Statute addresses this under [39-15-105 Exemptions](#):

(a) The following sales or leases are exempt from the excise tax imposed by this article:

(iv) For the purpose of exempting sales of services and tangible personal property sold to government, charitable and nonprofit organizations, irrigation districts and weed and pest control districts, the following are exempt:

(C) Occasional sales made by religious or charitable organizations for fund raising purposes for the conduct of regular religious or charitable functions and activities, and not in the course of any regular business. For the purposes of this subparagraph, "regular business" means the habitual or regular activity of the organization excluding any incidental or occasional operation.

Typically, libraries that have a book sale or two a year may not have to charge sales tax, while an ongoing book room might not qualify for the exemption. Some libraries also simply put the books out and accept free will donations, rather than actually selling the books.

Half-hearted thanks drive away donors

From the Future Fundraising Now blog (www.futurefundraisingnow.com): donors who don't feel appreciated won't keep coming back to your organization. Three cardinal sins to watch out for: 1) taking too long to acknowledge a gift, 2) being generic and cold instead of personal with your thank you letter, and 3) not telling your donor the impact their gift makes. Send your thank you letters quickly, make them personal and let them know what an impact their gift has on the library, the people who use it and the community it serves.

Foundation giving down 8.4% from 2008 to 2009

Economic hard times have put a dent in grant dollars, according to the 2010 [Foundation Growth and Giving Estimates](#), a report from the [Foundation Center](#). Total giving from corporate, independent and community foundations dropped from \$46.8 billion to \$42.9 billion from 2008 to 2009 – an 8.4% decrease. Foundations often base their current year grant making on their prior year assets, and foundation assets declined from \$682.2 billion in 2007 to \$565.0 billion in 2008. Assets rebounded slightly in 2009. Foundation grant expenditures are predicted to be flat in 2010 and to grow slightly in 2011, provided that there are no additional economic shocks.

Writing compelling fundraising appeal letters

by Gary Landeck, from the [Colorado Libraries](#) blog

One good way for libraries to raise their own money is by writing an appeal letter. This is usually done once per year by the institution's development officer and mailed to past donors. Good appeal letters have five elements:

1. A defined project. This is your reason for writing the letter. Even if your letter's purpose is primarily to support general operating expenses, be sure to call attention to a special concern, project, or event.
2. A personal story. Personal stories that illustrate how your library makes a difference is a great way to draw people into reading your letter.
3. The financial challenge your library is facing. Be clear about the costs associated with your project (see #1) and how donations can make a difference.
4. A reminder of your library's overall mission and how your appeal fits into it. When you ask for a contribution at the end of the letter, it will be in the spirit of asking the donor to reaffirm his or her support of the library's underlying mission.
5. A request for a donation. Always be direct in telling people what they can do to make your project (see #1) happen. If it's money, ask for it. If it's for volunteer help, ask for it. Depending on your technological capabilities, you may want to refer to the donor's most recent contribution and ask him/her to increase it by a certain amount.

Appeal letters should be straightforward, simple, and one page in length.

Gary Landeck is the director of the American Alpine Club Library in Golden, Colorado, the world's largest library dedicated to mountaineering and rock climbing.

This **Wyoming Library Foundations** newsletter is sent to the Wyoming county library directors for distribution to their library foundation and library board members. Individuals interested in viewing this can bookmark <http://will.state.wy.us/slpub/foundations/index.html>. Comments on the content of this publication or contributions to share with other library foundation board members can be sent to Jamie Markus at jmarku@wyo.gov or Susan Mark at smark@wyo.gov. *Please note: Inclusion of links to fund raising websites does not imply endorsement of their products or services.*