Small and Rural Libraries

Many of the references in this section have also been included in other sections that pertain to specific topics.

Tips and tools from the American Library Association Committee on Rural, Tribal and Native Libraries of All Kinds, the Association for Rural & Small Libraries and the ALA Office for Literacy and Outreach Services can be found in The Small but Powerful Guide for Winning Big Support for Your Rural Library, 2011. It contains “features strategies for advocating for and promoting library services to rural communities, tips for utilizing technology in advocacy efforts, and examples of essential marketing and promotion tools....”


“The One Person Library” had been a Newsletter for librarians and management published by Judith A. Siess. Although publication has ceased, archives are available with a controlled vocabulary list for help.

The Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship is located at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. Its focus is library outreach, bookmobile services, and the development and use of information technology in rural communities. Its mission is to extend knowledge relative to the nature and role of rural and small libraries on a global basis.

The Rural Library Resources Clearinghouse and the California Rural Library Initiative are supported by the U.S. Institute of Museums and Libraries under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act administered in California by the State Librarian. Their website provides manuals, guides, best practices and information of use not only to rural libraries but small and medium-sized libraries as well.

contents available. This guide was created for those with little formal LIS training working in small, rural libraries, and it could be helpful for librarians who are new to this area of service or need to brush up on their skills.

To address the collection development training needs of Arizona’s small and rural libraries, the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records created the Collection Development Training for Arizona Libraries site and provides information on various aspects of collection development and information resource management. This is an outstanding example of comprehensive, well written information provided in easy to digest chunks.

The Pennsylvania Public Library Accounting Manual was prepared by McKonley & Asbury LLP for the Pennsylvania Office of Commonwealth Libraries, 2004. “This manual is intended to be of primary benefit to small and medium-sized Pennsylvania Libraries that do not have full-time bookkeepers or accountants. For this reason, the manual’s main focus is on basic accounting principles and transaction recording. However, all libraries will benefit from the accounting policies, procedures and processing methods discussed in this manual.”


One of the early studies was the St. Louis Public Library report, “Public Library Valuation Study,” published in 1999 under the direction of their director, Glen Holt.


Newstead, Barry and Pat Wu, “Nonprofits in Rural America: Overcoming the Resource Gap,” The Bridgespan Group, July 15, 2009. This case study demonstrates the prevalence of rural poverty and the societal issues associated with it as they pertain to fund raising.

“Fundraising for Small Libraries,” a presentation at the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Libraries’ 21st Annual Institute for Trustees and Friends, was given by Lynne E. Tharan, Director, New Bethlehen Area Free Library, and Jessica Modrzejewski, System Administrator, Clarion County Library System.

Sandy Dixon from the State Library of Iowa attended a Rural Sustainability pre-conference sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation at the 2006 Public Library Association Conference. She summarized a series of presentations in her report, “What Funding Sources Want to Know about Your Library.”

Pat Wagner presented “Fast, Cheap, Good Enough: Practical Strategic Planning When You Don’t Have Time or Staff” for the Rural Initiative Videoconference and Webcast. “Strategic planning is vital for libraries, no matter how small, understaffed, overworked, rural or poor. It helps establish goals and priorities and makes communication more effective, which in turn can keep things saner.”

Designed for rural libraries, this Cookbook for Small and Rural Libraries begins with the development of a technology plan.

For help with wireless connections see Ernest William’s directions, “Public WiFi Service for Small Libraries.” Williams is the Network Systems Manager, eiNetwork, Allegheny County, PA.

Jennifer Babcock, Manager of Training and Development for Trump Entertainment Resorts, spoke to the Iowa Small Libraries Online Conference about customer service and demonstrated the similarities between her industry and public libraries. Her excellent slides with accompanying notes are available; unfortunately the audio is password protected.

WebJunction has archived conference handouts and reports from the 2008 Association for Rural and Small Libraries Annual Conference. Webjunction also archived a variety of webinars of interest to small and rural library directors.
The Georgia Public Library Services provides policies and procedures for library operations and human resources for smaller libraries.

“Protecting Library and Archive Collections: Disaster Preparedness, Response & Recovery” workshop was designed so attendees would learn how to complete a disaster plan, train staff, set priorities, use decision-making skills and experience salvage procedures for materials. Although this is part of the California Rural Library Initiative, supported by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian, the information is useful for all sizes of public libraries. The presenter, Julie A. Page is Co-Coordinator of both the California Preservation Program, an LSTA-funded initiative of the California State Library, and the Western States and Territories Preservation Assistance Service, a NEH-funded project. Note her information on working with the media and also insurance guidelines.

The WebJunction webinar, “Using Technology to Move your Small/Rural Library Forward,” is archived along with handouts. It was presented September 21, 2010, and focused on best practices. Another webinar from WebJunction, “Innovations from America's Best Small Libraries 2011,” has a robust website providing archives with chat, slides, audio and other links.

The Facebook account for the Pennsylvania Library Association Rural & Small Roundtable is “dedicated to the needs & challenges of rural & small libraries in Pennsylvania.”