



# Bulletin

L I B R A R Y A N D F U N D R A I S I N G C O N S U L T A N T S

*Needs Assessments*  
*Feasibility Studies*  
*Capital Campaigns*  
*Millage Campaigns*  
*Success!*

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- Have You Thanked Your Donors Lately?
- Success Story:  
Howell-Carnegie District Library

## Look for us at the MLA Conference!

Stop by and visit us  
at Booth 73 in the  
exhibit hall,  
pick up a paper cube  
and let us know  
what is going on at  
your library!

## What A No Vote Means

**H**as your library recently experienced a defeat at the polls? If the answer is yes, you may be chagrined at the lack of support or panicked as you contemplate how to operate with insufficient funds or in an insufficient building or both.

As Vince Lombardi said, "It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up."

When your library needs funding, you have no choice but to get back up. As you plan for the future, consider that a number of factors may have contributed to the millage/bond defeat. Further, it is important to figure out why voters said "no" before asking them again.

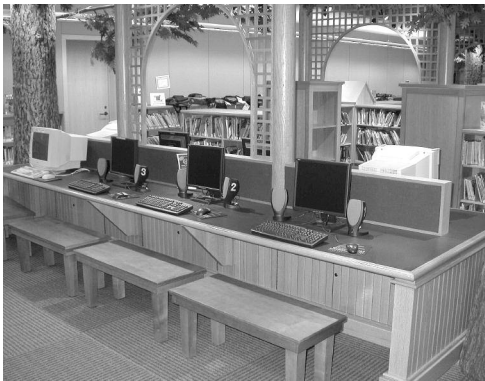
### The following may help you evaluate your recent election experience:

- When scheduling your ballot proposal, did you consider what other funding initiatives would be on the ballot and the number of voters likely to turn out? Obviously, primary and general elections have lengthier ballots and generate the most voter activity. Library proposals often finish poorly when competing against school and public safety issues. At the same time, a larger voter turnout necessitates recruiting more positive voters.
- Did voters have adequate information about the ballot request, and did they have it in a timely fashion? How well did you make the case? Was there sufficient time to learn about, understand and appreciate the need for requested funds? Consider that we live in a world of 30-second sound bytes and that, generally, we need to hear/see something seven times before we "know" it.
- Who was involved in the ballot initiative? Was it strictly library board and staff or was it a community coalition? Did community volunteers lead the election effort? Did community leaders endorse the ballot initiative? Getting the community involved is important for a number of reasons. As volunteers participate, they better understand the need and share that information with others. Broad participation also demonstrates that the library benefits the community as a whole, not just those who use it.
- Did you actively recruit "yes" voters? Did you build a database of positive voters and provide them with information prior to the election? Did you emphasize the importance of their vote? Did you use poll watchers to keep track of voters on election day and use that information to follow up with identified "yes" voters who hadn't yet voted? Identifying and informing "yes" voters is a critical step toward election success but means nothing if you don't get them to the polls.

Many factors contribute to a positive library vote. Focusing on the critical steps listed above can help assure a successful outcome in the future.

## Howell-Carnegie District Library

One year ago this month, the Howell-Carnegie District Library celebrated the opening of its “new” youth services area. The *Help Cultivate Young Minds* capital campaign provided funding to renovate space that was inadequate to serve growing numbers of young people of all ages.



When the original Howell-Carnegie building was expanded in 1991, library staff made a conscious decision to forego major design features in the youth area. They wanted to observe how the space was used over time. Eventually they identified four specific areas to address: furniture, shelving, ambiance and service points and staff areas.

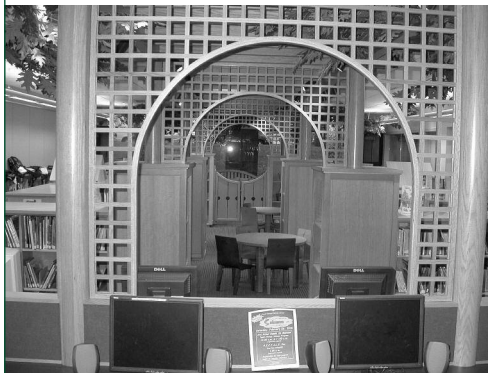
The resulting redesign by Alyce Riemenschneider created a warm, welcoming, “stay awhile” environment that encourages youth of all ages to linger and enjoy everything the library offers. Usage is up, especially among teens, who now have their very own area emblazoned with neon lighting. Multiple seating options make it easier for family groups to enjoy the library.

According to Kathleen Zaenger, library director, “People love the new space.” Adults comment how great everything



looks. Little kids’ eyes get big when they see the room for the first time. One of the best overhead comments is “There are trees in the library!”

The library gained more than improved space during the project and the campaign. Kathleen reports that they received great media coverage that helped them “show off” all of the library’s services. They also had an opportunity to build stronger relationships with different segments of the community.



“We learned that we had to be ready to describe the compelling need from a user’s point of view,” said Kathleen. Donor prospects wanted to know what they would gain from the project and why it was important, i.e., “what’s in it for me?”

Ultimately, the message was effectively delivered, and the result is a wonderfully enhanced library that children and families will enjoy for many years to come.

## Have You Thanked Your Donors Lately?

How do you thank your donors? If the answer isn’t “often,” you may be:

- Alienating those who valued the library enough to make a contribution
- Missing opportunities to cultivate future/ongoing gifts
- Overlooking chances to recruit positive voters for the next library bond or millage vote

While most people don’t give to be thanked, everyone expects to be thanked. It amounts to basic common courtesy and is something we teach our children early in life. Frequently thanking those who invest their time, talent and money in the library not only is important, it also helps build friends for life.

Harvey McKay, a well-known motivational speaker, suggests finding creative ways to stay in touch with people that are important to us. Seek out your donors and make them feel special. Acknowledge their generosity and what it has meant to the library. Ask their opinion about projects or issues. Invite them to special events at the library. At the very least, know your donors by name and make it a point to engage them in conversation when you see them. Bring them up to date about what is going on with the project they supported and other library news.

These ongoing interactions keep the donor connected to the library and, over time, build a relationship. Such relationships can benefit the library in many ways, including heightened awareness of and appreciation for the library, ongoing financial support and “yes” votes at the polls. If you haven’t thanked your donors lately, get busy!

We’d like to share ideas for thanking donors and building donor relationships. Email us at [annw@bretongroup.com](mailto:annw@bretongroup.com) to let us know how you have made your donors feel special. We’ll print you’re your suggestions in the next *Bulletin*.