From the Director’s Desk …

Library Funding and Finances: A Complicated Process

Before I became a library director, I never gave it a thought as to how libraries are funded. Of course, I knew that it’s our tax dollars that provide the services libraries offer to our citizens, but that was the extent of my cares. Even after I served on the Board of Trustees for our little library in Albany for over 12 years, I honestly had no clue as to where our library receives the monies to pay its bills. And if I want to be really honest with myself – and with you, our patrons – I was well into my first year as director at Albertson Memorial Library before I truly understood the process of government funding and budgeting. It’s complicated – and that’s putting it mildly.

Compared to other libraries, AML works with a small budget, relatively speaking, although I must admit that our $106,000-plus budget is more than I’ve ever had to deal with. Technically, AML is a joint library. That means our funding doesn’t just come from the village of Albany. We are on an equal footing with the township of Albany with each providing about 41% of our total funding. So where does the remaining 18% come from? We also receive funding from Green County (because we are located in Green County) and from neighboring Rock County (because a percentage of our patrons reside there).

So, you know where our funds come from, but where do they go? In 2024, a whopping 66% of our budget this year pays for wages and benefits for our part-time employees. That might seem like a lot, but we have reliable and competent staff members who truly enjoy their jobs, and they provide a great service to our community. We must pay them a fair wage. This year, $10,755 – 10% of our budget – has gone directly to our patrons through new materials and programs, with another $8,095 – 8% of our budget – going to providing additional services to those that frequent our library through delivery of materials from other libraries, technology devices and services, and training for staff. The remaining 20% of our budget goes to things that we have no control over – our utilities, insurance, building maintenance, and the like. I don’t know where our library would be if we didn’t have our beautiful facility built and donated to us by the very generous Albertson family. Where would we fit building rent or “mortgage” in our budget?

Albertson Memorial Library is fortunate to be a part of such a giving community. In addition to publicly funding our beautiful library and all that we have to offer, our community members remember us through their charitable donations. Most often, that is during their biggest time of need at the loss of a loved one. With our donations, we can provide materials and services above and beyond what our budget allows. This summer, we were able to open our “Treasure Trove”, a library of things. With that, our patrons can check out tables, canopies, Nesco roasters, outdoor family games, a keyboard, a leaf blower, a metal detector, and so much more. We also have immense support with our annual silent auction that ends on October 25th.

The first draft of my library budget has now been submitted to the library board of trustees, the Albany Village board, and the Albany Town board. I’ve already made revisions, and I know that more revisions will be made before it’s presented to al three boards for final approval. Setting the library’s budget is a huge task, but I like playing with those numbers and seeing how far I can stretch those taxpayers’ dollars!

Melissa Everson, Director

Albertson Memorial Library