

What's a Library Worth?

Beyond the Balance Sheet

There are several ways to think about a library's worth in a community. We can calculate the money invested in the physical collection of items available for patron borrowing: the books, DVDs, CDs, and magazines; the computers, software, scanners, copy and fax machines that help people do business; the projection screens, amplifiers, and disc players used in presenting programs for patrons.

We can think about the money invested in building the structure, and furnishing it with shelving, tables, chairs, and counters, as well as the electrical system, furnace, air conditioning, and plumbing.

We can consider the money invested in the people who work in the library. The circulation staff who are the frontline in serving patrons; the support staff who purchase, prepare and repair materials for patrons to borrow, who maintain equipment for patrons and staff to use in the library, who clean the facility and material; the programming staff who create and run educational and entertainment programs for youth and adults; the administrative staff who train library workers, apply for grants, ensure compliance with regulations, research purchases, monitor budgets and expenditures.

But investments such as those above are just part of the value a library embodies in its community. They are relatively easy to see or calculate. What is not so easy to observe is the benefit that the community receives from having the library in its midst. After all, an institution whose resources are free or low-cost for the public to use does not generate much revenue. But a library's resources and services definitely boost the economic well-being of a community.

In a 2014 study of available research on the contributions American public libraries make to the economic prosperity of the communities they serve, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, an independent agency of the US federal government, found that **for every dollar a community invested in its public library, the community received an average of \$8.76 worth of direct and indirect benefits.**

What sort of library services provide direct benefits? Borrowing books, DVDs or CDs instead of buying them can save patrons money. Being able to use a meeting room rather than renting meeting space can save an organization funds. Being able to scan documents for free, and copy and fax at a very

low cost helps keep overhead costs low for the entrepreneur.

What sort of library services provide indirect benefits? These tend to be more difficult to quantify, but often have far-reaching effects in the community. When patrons use our public computers to conduct job searches or complete online job applications, they are using library resources that can


change their lives, creating benefits for themselves, the organizations that hire them, and the community at large. When children in a community develop a love of reading and greater reading proficiency through involvement in the library's early literacy programs, they cost the schools less to educate them, and have a better chance of contributing positively and powerfully to their community.

When calculating the worth of a library to its community, we need to take into account many factors, looking beyond the annual balance sheet to the growth and well-being of patrons, organizations, and the community as a whole.



Graduates of the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program have a great start on literacy and school success.

September 2018 Programs

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 <b style="font-size: 2em; margin-right: 10px;">BARABOO PUBLIC LIBRARY						
230 Fourth Avenue Baraboo, WI 53913 608-356-6166 baraboopubliclibrary.org						
1						1
2	3 CLOSED FOR LABOR DAY	4 Booker's Buddies Story Time 10am Rhyme Time Story Time 11am Memoir Workshop 2pm TEEN TUESDAY - Princess Bride with Audience Participation 4pm	5 Babygarten Story Time 9:30am Puppy Club Story Time 11am Building Blocks (LEGO bricks & Minecraft) 1:30pm	6 CrafterNoon 3:45pm Protecting Rural & Municipal Ground Water - Ken Bradbury 6:30pm	7 Free Playgroup 9am Wii Bowling for Adults 12pm	8 ANIME AND MANGA CLUB 10am
9	10 Teen Book Club for Homeschoolers 1pm Twilight Tales 6:30pm	11 Booker's Buddies Story Time 10am Rhyme Time Story Time 11am TEEN TUESDAY - Fall Sing-Along 4pm Lit Wits Book Group 6:30pm	12 Babygarten at Oak Park Place 9:30am Puppy Club Story Time 11am Building Blocks (LEGO bricks & Minecraft) 1:30pm	13 Homeschooling Program for Families 9:30am CrafterNoon 3:45pm Digitize Your Family Photos - Penny Johnson 6:30pm	14 Free Playgroup 9am Wii Bowling for Adults 12pm	15 Photo Scanning Day by Appointment 9am to 12pm Scarecrows on Parade 10am Pre-Registration Required
16	17 Word Games for Adults 6pm Twilight Tales 6:30pm	18 Booker's Buddies Story Time at Oak Park Place 10am Rhyme Time Story Time 11am Guardianship at Senior Center 1pm TEEN TUESDAY - Say Cheese! 4pm Tuesdays with Murder 6:30pm	19 Babygarten Story Time 9:30am Puppy Club Story Time 11am Building Blocks (LEGO bricks & Minecraft) 1:30pm Readers Anonymous 6:30pm	20 CrafterNoon 3:45pm READ to Shadow, a Cat! 6pm Protecting Rural Surface Water - Serge Koenig 6:30pm	21 Free Playgroup 9am Wii Bowling for Adults 12pm	22
23 30	24 Coffee Break - Twilight Tales 6:30pm Story Time for Adults 6:30pm	25 Coffee Break - Booker's Buddies Story Time 10am Rhyme Time Story Time 11am Financial Planning at Senior Center 1pm TEEN TUESDAY - Banned Books Week 4pm	26 Coffee Break - Babygarten Story Time 9:30am Coffee Break - Puppy Club Story Time 11am Building Blocks (LEGO bricks & Minecraft) 1:30pm	27 CrafterNoon at St. Clare Meadows 4pm Protecting Urban Waterways - Rick Eilertson 6:30pm	28 Free Playgroup 9am	29