Center for Financial Security
Family Financial Security Webinar Series
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Public Libraries as Financial Literacy Supports

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Public Libraries as Financial Literacy Supports

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University of Wisconsin-Madison
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Background: data sources

- **Library workers**
  - Interviews of library workers at 5 Wisconsin sites
- **Training issues**
  - Library worker interviews
  - March 2010 survey
- **Partnerships in offering services**
  - Interviews with partners
  - March 2010 survey
Challenges

• Funding levels in libraries
• Staffing levels in libraries
• Sensitive topics → communication barriers
  – For librarian and patron alike
• Public libraries, public Internet spaces
  – Social service agency contacts for food stamps, housing, Social Security Disability
“I’m not the expert in this. I can find materials; I’m not the authority. It’s basically the role of a librarian, is helping people find sources, not counseling them.”
Complexities of the system:

“I hate to refer people to huge agencies like Social Security.”
Privilege:

“I know there are some people on our staff who don’t make enough money, who work part-time, and so they’re on BadgerCare, and they go in and out of that because of different things that happen in their lives. And they probably know more about it than I do.

I’ve been privileged enough that I haven’t had to have those issues, or face a lot of the problems that my patrons are facing.”
Enormity of the information need:

The people who ask us questions are generally really, really lost, and I don’t feel that I serve them very well, because it’s a big gap from “Where’s the free money” to “How do I get a loan”
Computer skills:

“They need extra special help to be able to work on a resume or put something together to read and understand how to use the computers – because so many businesses now are requiring that they fill in their application forms online, and they don’t even know how to use a mouse.”
“And people who have no computer skills, no typing skills, ...they’re literate, but it’s kind of marginal literacy. And now in order to get a job at Walmart, they have to go through all of this. And they’re very unsure about it”
Library Survey Responses:

- Respondents:
  - 66% had MLS (professional degree)
  - Most > 4 years experience
  - 63% interacted with public
  - 24% were library directors
Training:

Less than 10% had any financial literacy training

Popular modes: webinar, on-the-job, face-to-face

Only 5% had library school training related to financial information
Financial Literacy Partners:

- Referrals
- Who do libraries partner with?
- Pros and cons of working with libraries from the partner perspective
- What do partnerships consist of?
Referrals:

- Regular referrals are a form of partnership.
- Referral to appropriate agencies can be challenging. Knowledge about where to refer relies on a solid base of knowledge about:
  - (a) the subject domain, financial need
  - (b) the availability of relevant organizations in the local area
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Type</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State or local government agency or office</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial services/investment organization</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit union or bank</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job center</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>College/university</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>K-12 schools</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other library</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal government agency (such as the local or state office of the Social Security Administration or a branch bank of the Federal Reserve)</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way or similar charitable organization</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional membership organization</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer credit counseling service</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other non-profit organization (please describe)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law firm</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food bank</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church or religious charity</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other local business</td>
<td>9%</td>
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</tbody>
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Pros of Working with Libraries:

- Aura of trust
- Environment not overwhelming
- Free publicity
- Internet access
- Low cost/free
- Referrals
Cons of working with libraries:

• Competition for space and time with other programs
• Little technology support
• Lack of support for networking among partners
• Concerns about disruptive clients
• Frustration with privacy issues
Program types vary by:

- **Topic**
- **Motivator or origin of the idea**
  - Partner approaches library or vice versa
- **Type of programming**
  - One on one, group counseling, classes.
- **Residency period**
  - Single class, repeated but irregular, regular weekly hours
Thank you for your attention!

Project report and bibliography: http://publibraryfinlit.wordpress.com/
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Discussant

Billy Hensley, Ph.D.
Director of Education, National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE)
PUBLIC LIBRARIES AS FINANCIAL LITERACY SUPPORTERS

Billy J Hensley, PhD
Public Libraries as Financial Literacy Supporters

• What is at the heart of what librarians want for their profession?
  – Adaptable
  – Knowledgeable
  – Resourceful

• Do librarians want to know more about financial literacy?
  – Transferrable
  – Increased Comfort Level

www.NEFE.org
Public Libraries as Financial Literacy Supporters

• Indirectly Impacting Patrons’ Financial Literacy
  – Computer Skills
  – Resources
  – Partnerships
  – Higher Access to Underserved Populations
  – Information Intermediary
Public Libraries as Financial Literacy Supporters

• Questions about Training
  – Webinars
  – In-house
    • Partners
  – Nonprofits/Government (outside library)
    • Partners
  – Library School
    • Part of Curriculum
      – Elective
Public Libraries as Financial Literacy Supporters

• Making a Case for More Training
  – Increased Knowledge for Self
    • Improved Confidence
    • Improved Financial Behaviors
    • Greater Understanding of “Good” Resources
  – Increased Knowledge for the Discipline
  – Increased Knowledge for Patrons
Public Libraries as Financial Literacy Supporters

• A Parallel to Educators
  – Increased Demand for Programming
    • Educational Interventions
    • Increased Requests from Patrons
  – Becoming a Consultant
    • Do Not Have to Know All the Answers
    • True Definition of Intermediary
    • Continued Credibility in Community
Billy J Hensley, PhD
Director of Education
A Case Study in Financial Literacy

Ken Hall, Director
Fond du Lac Public Library
Fond du Lac Public Library supports a high quality of life in Fond du Lac through reading, lifelong learning, and community involvement.
FDLPL is about making connections

People come to us because we are the Nice agency.
Connections Go Both Ways

• We define ourselves as a community library, not just for the ways we are involved in the community but by the ways the community is involved in the library

• Financial Program presenters are professionals from the community

• Our *Opportunity Center* relies on volunteers with special skills

• Other service providers come to us to help expand their programs
How We Got Involved

• Expanding Definition of Library as Community Center
• Looking at what we had to offer – how can our resources be used in new ways?
• Redefining Reference Service
• We are about literacy in all it’s forms. In these economic times, financial literacy is more important than ever.
Requirements for Change

- Get over ourselves – Change is not “mission creep”

- Establish Connections
  - Businesses
  - Individuals
  - Other programs in the library
Supporting Financial Literacy

• Joined *Money Smart* starting 2004
• 2009 FINRA Grant based on our Work with Money Smart
• Established a Money Smart Neighborhood
• Established Money Smart U
• Greatly increased material for smart saving and investing
One Program Relates to Another

- Supporting Computer Literacy leads to
- Supporting Financial Literacy leads to
- Establishing Opportunity Center leads to...
Community Support

- Volunteers
- Recognition of importance of library by decision makers
Thank you!

Ken Hall
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February 2012 Webinar

Tuesday, February 14, 2012
1pm - 2pm CDT / 2pm - 3pm EDT

Payday Lending

Justin Sydnor, Assistant Professor UW-Madison School of Business

For more information on the 2011 CFS Webinar Series: http://cfs.wisc.edu