March 21, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Lisa Strand, WLA Executive Director, (608) 245-3640/(608) 516-2067
strand@scls.lib.wi.us

Library Supporters to Rally, Meet with Legislators March 22

At least 250 library supporters are expected to rally to promote the value of libraries on Wednesday, prior to meeting with legislators as part of the annual Library Legislative Day. Co-sponsored by the Wisconsin Library Association and the Wisconsin Educational Media &Technology Association, the annual event brings librarians from school, public, academic and special libraries together for a common purpose: to advocate for the important roles libraries of all types play in today’s society. Specifically this year, the group will address funding needs in the state biennial budget.

“We understand the need for shared sacrifice,” said Lisa Strand, WLA Executive Director. “However, libraries are already models of efficiency and resource-sharing – and more people are using libraries than ever.”

During the last 5 years, public library visits have increased by more than 10% and loans of library materials have increased 15%. During the same time, the number of paid staff has increased less than 1%, according to statistics reported annually by public libraries to the Department of Public Instruction. Nationally, Wisconsin’s public libraries rank 8th in circulation, but 22nd for total operating revenue and 20th for paid library staff per capita.
In addition to lean times for public libraries, students in K-12 and higher education have also suffered the effects of budget cuts that have reduced professional staff to serve students as well as print and electronic materials.

Library Legislative Day attendees plan to ask legislators to restore funding levels to allow libraries to continue to share resources and provide the broadest possible access to information, to help grow Wisconsin’s economy and educate its citizenry.

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The Wisconsin Library Association engages, inspires and advocates for library workers and supporters to improve and promote library services for the people of Wisconsin. Nearly 2,000 members strong, WLA is celebrating 120 years of advocating for library service. The Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association embraces individuals involved in the support, utilization, and integration of information, communication, and technology and to advance their efforts to improve student growth and achievement.