

## Case 4

Lauren Melton, a professional librarian with a master's degree, was recently promoted to Assistant Head Librarian in the Wentern Public Library. She lives and works in the community of Wentern, a small suburb of a Midwestern city.

Her new position includes preparation of the library budget for presentation to the Library Board. The Library is a separate local taxing body supported by real estate taxes. Revenue has not kept pace with increased expenses for the library. As with many other taxing bodies, the budget is tight.

It is "budget season" and Lauren is agonizing over how to redistribute the funds available without cutting services. Several years of diminished acquisitions budgets and library hours have left little "fat" in the budget.

The Library Director, Morton Franz, has suggested the deletion of one particular program - Outreach Services (OS). Through OS, people with documented disabilities who request books receive them by delivery and carts of books are taken to several nursing homes. OS is very popular. It occupies part of a librarian's time to administer and supervise volunteers who pull the books and make deliveries. The Director's argument is that the OS patrons served per staff hour is very low compared to that for patrons who come into the library. He has calculated that OS costs roughly the same as keeping the library open ½ hour a day or as much as subscription to a number of periodicals.

At a brainstorming session of the Wentern Public Library Board, one board member worried that the handicapped and nursing home patrons might sue the Library District if their services were cut. Another countered that "these people probably won't have the inclination or the means to sue." Another pointed out that there would be less negative publicity from cutting OS than, for example, from having the library open its doors ½ hour later everyday.

The easiest route to solving her problem is to cut OS. Her boss advocates it. There is evidence the Board would support it. And it is easier than looking for a little here and a little there to cut from the budget. But, Lauren is troubled by taking away a service from a particularly needy population. Where, she wonders, does the "greater good" lie?