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By the Book

Small Business and the Public Library: Strategies for a Successful Partnership

By Luise Weiss, Sophia Serlis-McPhillips, and Elizabeth Malafi / Chicago: ALA, 2011
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Toward the end of *Small Business and the Public Library*, authors Weiss, Serlis-McPhillips, and Malafi state that to insure longevity and continual growth, the small business community center/library must break away from tradition and forge

new and innovative partnerships with the business community (p. 93). To say that over the years public library culture has become less user-friendly to business interests is an understatement. Policies and practices initially intended to protect patrons and public tax dollars have created unintended barriers to access for business users. *Small Business and the Public Library* seeks to change this by highlighting the steps taken in establishing Middle Country Public Library's highly successful Miller Business Resource Center in Centereach, New York.

Divided into eight chapters, this clear and concise book touches on virtually every topic relevant to creating a vibrant library business and economic development center. It focuses less on the traditional listing of sources and more on the development of engaging programs and services designed to draw community stakeholders to the library. The authors emphasize that if a library is targeting the business community, then it must accept the realities that time is money, a high premium must be placed on the efficient delivery of services, and both staff and administration must be in agreement that some library policies should be created to accommodate the unique needs of this community.

What differentiates this work from others on the topic is that it focuses on funding library services in a nontraditional way. Programming and outreach, both costly endeavors, can be delivered successfully by employing a combination of library staff, community partners (both for-profit and nonprofit), and contracted professionals. While every effort should be made to prevent for-profit partners from directly marketing their products and services to library patrons, some incentives should be in place to guarantee their participation. Cobranding of library programs, sponsorships, in-house trade shows, and networking events are all methods mentioned that can assist with the delivery of library business services.

Small Business and the Public Library is not another "book of lists." Instead it is one of the more creative works written on adapting to the evolving needs of

the business community. Simply building a business library and stocking it with resources is no longer sufficient. Creative solutions that recognize the specific needs of a community are essential in any business center's success. Using the real-world examples and sound advice outlined in this book as a foundation for creating a library's business center can enhance and guarantee any business library's relevancy well into the future.—Aaron Mason, Outreach and Programming Services Manager, Cleveland (Ohio) Public Library