**Budgeting: Or How Much Does That Cost?**

As a new librarian, one of the first tasks is to find out how much you will be involved with the fiscal management of the library. Here are some questions to ask your principal or superintendent:

- What is the library's budget for this year? (Get a copy!)
- Who receives the bills and verifies that the goods or services charged for have been received?
- If you are responsible for preparing the financial statement, what format should you use? Are there computer programs or forms that are set up for this purpose?
- If the fiscal management is handled primarily by someone other than the staff, how is the staff kept informed of the library's financial status?
- Is there a limit set on the size of expenditures that can be made by the staff without preapproval?

Knowing answers to these questions will give you a good handle on your library's fiscal situation.

**The Budget Year**

The fiscal year for schools will be July 1 through June 30. The building principal and district superintendent will be individuals with information about how the district budget process works.

Information for the budget should be collected throughout the whole year. It is wise to keep a budget file, where you can keep newspaper clippings, notes, and other information about potential changes in costs. In this way, you will have all that information together when you need it.

You will also need to find out the budget process. Will the principal or superintendent ask you to present a draft budget? It is important that you as the librarian have input into the budget, as you will know the day-to-day operation of the library better than any other person.

Once you know the process, you can begin to develop cost figures. You will need to gather cost information from a variety of sources, such as the present year's expenditures, catalogs, information on utility rates and the cost of living rate that appears in newspapers and other sources, and information you gather from service vendors. Remember that in budgeting you are making a series of educated guesses. The more information you have, the better your guesses will be.