



Library
Advocacy
Now!
@your.library

American Library Association
Office for Library Advocacy
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
Tel. 800.545.2433, ext. 2431
Fax: 312.280.3255
Email: advocacy@ala.org
www.ala.org/issues&advocacy



Library Advocate's Handbook

Who Are Library Advocates?

Building a Library Advocacy Network

The Action Plan

Speaking Out

Dealing with the Media

Dealing with Legislators

Ways to Communicate

Library Advocate's Checklist

Resources

ALAAmericanLibraryAssociation



Library Advocate's Handbook

3rd Edition ©2008

American Library Association Office for Library Advocacy

50 East Huron Street

Chicago, Illinois 60611

Telephone: 800.545.2433, ext. 2431

Fax: 312.280.3255

Email: advocacy@ala.org

www.ala.org/issues&advocacy

Acknowledgement:

The American Library Association has benefited from the expertise and experience of many excellent media trainers and library advocates, including the late Charles Beard, State University of West Georgia, and the late Gerald Hodges, American Library Association. This handbook includes much of their wisdom.

Editor:

Marci Merola, Interim Director, ALA Office for Library Advocacy

Contributors:

Carol A. Brey-Casiano

Director, El Paso Public Library, Texas;

2004–2005 ALA Past President

Andy Bridges

Communications Director, ALA Washington Office

Susan J. Schmidt

Past- President, Friends of Libraries USA; Past President,

Friends of the Library, Montgomery County, Maryland

Patricia Glass Schuman

President, Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc.;

1991–1992 ALA Past-President

Contents

- 2 Introduction**
- 3 Who Are Library Advocates?**
- 4 Building a Library Advocacy Network**

- 7 The Action Plan**
 - 7 Getting organized
 - 8 Delivering the message
 - 15 Developing Your Action Plan Worksheet

- 16 Speaking Out**
 - 16 Telling the library story
 - 17 Speaking successfully
 - 18 Speaker's Checklist

- 19 Dealing with the Media**
 - 20 Staying in control
 - 21 Handling tough questions
 - 23 Dealing with bad news
 - 24 Broadcast media

- 25 Dealing with Legislators**
 - 26 Know your legislator
 - 26 Shaping the message
 - 26 Who can be most effective?
 - 27 Know Your Legislator worksheet

- 28 Ways to communicate**
 - 28 Tips for effective letters
 - 30 Tips for effective visits
 - 31 What is the best time to talk?
 - 31 Legislative Action Schedule

- 32 Library Advocate's Checklist**
- 35 Resources available from the ALA**

Introduction

“Isn’t Amazon.com going to put public libraries out of business?”

“Why do school libraries need money for books when everything is online?”

“Why do we need a campus library when students can do their research on the Internet?”

Technology has vastly changed the way most of us access information, and it has greatly enhanced library and information services. It has also raised some unsettling questions.

Library advocates have a critical role to play in answering these questions. In schools, on campuses, in neighborhoods, and on Capitol Hill, library advocates are the voice of America’s libraries.

The American Library Association’s advocacy trainings, including Library Advocacy Now! and Advocacy Institutes, are designed to support librarians, library staff, and library advocates in delivering the library message to legislators; the media; and campus, community and school officials who shape public opinion and control support for library services.

The Library Advocate’s Handbook covers basic techniques that work, whether you are seeking an increase in funding, campaigning for a new building or dealing with controversy on social networking or the USA PATRIOT Act.

Used in conjunction with training at state, regional and national library conferences, the *Library Advocate’s Handbook* has reached thousands of library advocates, enabling them to increase public awareness and support for library services.

But our efforts are far from over. In the information age, library advocates continue to have a crucial role to play in educating our communities about why libraries and librarians are essential in an information society. To be effective, they must speak loudly, clearly and with a unified voice. Democracy needs libraries. And libraries need advocates.

For more information, contact:

American Library Association
Office for Library Advocacy
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
Telephone: 800.545.2433, ext. 2431
Email: advocacy@ala.org
www.ala.org/issues&advocacy

Who Are Library Advocates?

Library advocates believe in the importance of free and equitable access to information in a democratic society. Library advocates believe libraries and librarians are vital to the future of an information literate nation. Library advocates speak out for libraries. Library advocates are everywhere although they don't always call themselves that. They are:

Library trustees

Whether elected or appointed, trustees generally have political and community connections that can benefit the library. They also have clout as public officials charged with representing the best interest of the library and their community.

Friends of libraries

As library “ambassadors” in the community, Friends play a valuable role as the eyes and ears of the library as well as its voice. They also help provide the numbers that make legislators sit up and take notice.

Library users (Stakeholders)

Students, faculty, parents, seniors, business people and other library users are vital to any advocacy effort. Their testimonials about how the library has helped them and how much they need libraries provide powerful evidence that commands attention from decision makers.

Institutional and community leaders

School principals, college presidents, union leaders, CEOs and foundation officials should be part of your advocacy network. Support from such leaders helps to ensure your message will be heard at the highest levels.

Librarians and library staff

On the job or off, all library staff have countless opportunities to build both public understanding and support. Library administrators are responsible for developing and coordinating an ongoing advocacy effort, one with well-defined roles for staff, trustees and Friends.

Library and Information Science students

Those pursuing a master's degree in Library and Information Science have obviously dedicated their careers to libraries. Often, this is an untapped group that could become effective advocates.

Potential advocates

Every library has supporters who may not belong to a library support group or even use the library. But they may have fond memories of using the library as children, have family members who benefit from library use or simply believe libraries are important. Some may be highly placed in their institutions or communities. These potential advocates are often glad to speak out if asked.

Building a Library Advocacy Network

While crisis may foster a sense of urgency, building an effective library advocacy network requires a sustained effort. There must be ongoing recruitment, clear structure and regular communication to keep library advocates informed and involved. In many cases, the Friends of the Library are the nucleus for such a network. While there may not be a need for formal meetings, there should be personal contact on a regular basis with your advocates.

To be most effective, your library advocacy network should represent a cross section of your campus, school or community by age, income and ethnicity. It should include members of the business community, distinguished alumni, newspaper editors and legislators, as well as library users and staff. The larger and more diverse your network—and the more powerful its members—the stronger the influence it will wield.

Tips

- **Designate** an advocacy coordinator responsible for coordinating and communicating advocacy activities with staff, board members, Friends and others. Citizen groups should work closely with the library board and administration to ensure consistency in the library message and avoid duplication of effort.
- **State your message clearly.** Provide training in how to deliver the message as part of orientation for all library staff, trustees, volunteers and advocates.

- **Survey** the library's trustees, Friends, users and supporters. What civic or professional organizations do they belong to? Are they willing to write letters, call legislators and recruit other advocates? Do they have helpful contacts with the media, administration, school board or community? Are they experienced, skilled speakers?
- **Create a database** with names of advocates, their contact information, names of their elected representatives and other pertinent information. Keep the database current.

Make sure library advocates receive the library newsletter and annual report as well as updates on funding, legislation and other concerns. Set up a telephone tree and electronic mailing list to quickly disseminate action alerts.

What You Can Do

Librarians and library staff

- Think about who you know and who can help support the library. Supporters can appear in the least likely places, from your next door neighbor to a coworker!
- Recruit advocates at every opportunity. Hand out library advocacy information available from the Office for Library Advocacy and the Association for Library Trustees and Advocates.
- Call and write members of your advocacy network at least twice a year to give them updated information.

-
- Invite your advocacy network to subscribe to an electronic discussion list to receive updates and action alerts on library issues.
 - Be enthusiastic and positive. Let library users and supporters know they can make a difference. Make a point of thanking them for their contributions.
 - Meet with community, campus and school leaders regularly to educate them about your activities and concerns and to recruit their assistance.
 - Stay informed about advocacy activities of the American Library Association and your state association. Watch for legislative alerts, programs and tools that may benefit your library and community.
 - Keep library users informed of library issues and advocacy activities. Post action alerts in the library. Dedicate a portion of your library's newsletter and website to local, state or national legislative issues and concerns. Link to ALA's and your state association's advocacy web pages.
 - Encourage library users to share their "library stories." Invite them to testify at budget hearings, participate in media interviews and visit legislators with library officials.
 - Participate in influential community business or campus groups and use this as an opportunity to tell the library story and recruit library advocates.

Trustees

- Keep your trustees well informed about library issues such as funding, censorship, Internet filtering (or policies) and information literacy.
- Make a point of getting to know the officials with decision-making power regarding the library.
- Use your political savvy and connections on behalf of the library.
- Participate in your state and national Library Legislative Days to ensure the voice of library supporters is heard.
- Maintain communication with officials and their staff even when you aren't seeking their support. Keep them informed of library concerns.
- Hold an annual recognition event for library advocates, including business, campus and community leaders and legislators who have lent their support. A good time would be during National Library Week. Visit www.ala.org/issues&advocacy for a list of current events.

Friends

- Make sure your Friends group understands what advocacy is, their role and the need to act in cooperation with the library administration and trustees.
- Work with your Board of Trustees on events and all year long.
- Start an advocacy committee to monitor library and information issues at the local, state and national levels.
- Publish a regular column in the Friends newsletter with updates on library-related issues at the local, state and national levels. The ALA Washington Office provides federal legislative updates via the online newsletter ALAWON and on its website at www.ala.org/washoff/ (see Advocacy Resources on page 36).
- Include news items about your local, state and national legislators and their positions on library and information issues. The ALA Washington Office provides legislative updates in its online and print newsletters (see Advocacy Resources on page 36).
- Invite key people—city council members, college administrators, business owners, heads of organizations—to be honorary Friends. Invite them to a reception and tour and add them to the Friends mailing list.
- Write letters-to-the-editor or an op-ed in support of the library. Call in to a radio talk show to voice your concerns.
- Invite local legislators to speak to the Friends group. Thank or recognize them for their support.

The Action Plan

Library advocacy should be tied to the library's overall goals and ongoing public awareness program. To mount an effective advocacy campaign, you must have an action plan with a clear goal and objectives. You must have a clear message and speak with a unified voice.

Use the worksheet on page 11 to create your customized action plan.

Using ALA's national campaign materials can make your job easier and strengthen the voice of libraries and librarians nationwide on education, copyright and other policy issues that will shape the future of library and information services. These materials can be easily adapted for use by different types of libraries at the state and local levels.

Having an advocacy action plan will save you time and energy. It will also give you a "bigger bang for your buck" by helping you use your resources more efficiently. You will, of course, need to prepare a budget that identifies how much money will be needed to accomplish your goals and where the money will come from.

But before you put your plan on paper, you must know exactly what it is you want to accomplish. Do you want to pass a referendum? Increase the library budget? Or do you want to pass a new law or policy on the state or local level? Are you trying to defeat a particular piece of legislation? What will it take to make it happen? Once you have identified your goals, you are ready to organize.

Getting Organized

1. Define goals and objectives. Identify your desired outcomes, such as: new legislation, more funding, greater visibility.

2. Assess the situation in targeted areas based on your objectives. Identify barriers, opposition, strengths and potential supporters.

3. Identify critical tasks.

Important areas include:

- Establishing a steering committee
- Developing a budget
- Recruiting volunteers
- Coordinating of activities with the American Library Association and your state association
- Fundraising

4. Develop a communication plan.

Critical elements include:

- Defining the key message
- Targeting key audiences
- Identifying communication strategies and resources needed

5. Develop a work plan with tasks, assignments and deadlines. Monitor your progress regularly.

6. Document and evaluate results. This is how you learn to do it better next time.

Delivering the Message

The Communication Plan

A basic element of any public awareness and advocacy campaign is a communication plan with clearly defined key messages, audiences and strategies for reaching those audiences. It's important that all library staff and advocates understand the plan, its rationale and their role in supporting it.

Step 1. Define the Key Message.

Your central or key message should be one that is simply and consistently communicated, whether in a radio interview or over the backyard fence. It may be as simple as: "There is no such thing as a good education without good libraries." The key message should be easily adapted for various audiences—parents, business people, educators or legislators. For each group, you will want to have talking points, stories and examples that address its particular needs and interests. This set of core messages will provide the basis for presentations to groups, articles in newsletters, news releases, letters to the editor and other communications. You also will want to have a clear call to action. What do you want each group to do? Be prepared to give concrete ways each group can demonstrate its support.

Step 2. Target Your Audiences.

Who can help you achieve what you want? Once you know your goal and have identified the key message, brainstorm potential audiences. For example, if your library enjoys strong support among senior citizens, they may be a primary audience for a ballot initiative on funding. Teachers and parents are vital to winning support for bigger school library budgets. Alumni may be an obvious audience for college and university libraries. If you do not have good relationships with these groups and have enough lead time, you may want to start building those relationships now.

If time is short, your funding is tight or if there is opposition by some groups, you may wish to target those who are most likely to be supportive. Don't forget to include children, who can be especially effective when delivering a message to parents, grandparents and the media.

Potential Target Audiences

External:

- Library users
- Donors and potential donors
- Elected officials
- Journalists
- Other librarians
- School board members
- Civic and neighborhood associations
- College students/alumni
- Professional associations
- Teachers and school administrators
- Children and teens
- Faculty/administrators
- Seniors
- Business community

Internal:

- Staff
- Trustees
- Volunteers
- Friends
- Advocates

Step 3. Identify Communication Strategies.

There are three primary types of communication strategies:

- Outreach to groups
- Personal contact
- The media

In developing your communication plan, think carefully about how best to reach your target audiences. Thinking strategically can save time and money, as well as increase the reach and effectiveness of your message. Although all three types of strategies have advantages, the most effective is one-on-one communication. A visit to a legislator is more likely to be remembered than a letter.

A personal letter of support carries more weight than a direct mail brochure. You're more likely to remember what your neighbor tells you than something from a newspaper or radio ad. One-on-one communication is also the most time consuming, which is why having a network of library advocates ready and willing to speak out is invaluable. Outreach to groups—through speaking engagements, library tours or exhibits—can be an effective way of reaching specific audiences who share particular interests and concerns. Mass media are most effective in reaching large audiences.

For any of these strategies to work, you must have a well-defined message with supporting points that are meaningful to your audience. You must be ready to answer any questions that might arise. Having effective spokespeople is critical for speaking engagements, radio and TV shows where personal appearance and speaking skills are absolute musts for delivering the message successfully.

In addition to identifying strategies, your communication plan should include goals for the number and timing of telephone calls to targeted leaders, news releases and public service announcements, placement of op-ed pieces, radio and TV interviews and speaking engagements.

Consider the following when deciding which strategies to use:

WHO is the audience and what is the key message for that audience?

WHAT is the best way to convey the information to the target audience—radio, TV, direct mail or another? What kind of image do you want to project? Will it be an effective part of your total communication effort?

WHEN is the deadline? Will your message be distributed in time to be effective?

HOW much will it cost? Is this the most effective use of available funds?

WHY is this the best strategy for this audience?

Sample Strategies

Consider the following when identifying outreach opportunities:

Advertising

If funds permit, do what commercial advertisers do: Buy space or time in your local media. Most newspapers, radio and TV stations offer nonprofit discounts. In addition to reaching your audience, paid advertising allows you to control the placement and timing of your message, which may be critical in cases such as an election. Friends of the Library, a business or other partner organization may be willing to underwrite the costs.

Editorial Board

You may wish to schedule a meeting with the editorial board of your local newspaper to seek an endorsement. (Some radio and TV stations offer this, too.) The editorial board generally consists of the editorial page editor and high-ranking editorial staff. Sometimes reporters with expertise in a particular area are invited. These meetings—usually about an hour—are an opportunity for you to make the case for support and to answer questions.

You will want to take two or three of your most knowledgeable and articulate advocates as well as fact sheets and other briefing materials. Prepare ahead of time to make a 15-minute presentation and to answer difficult questions.

News Conference

You may wish to hold a news conference or briefing but only if the news is of such magnitude and urgency that it is best released all at once to a large group. This is rarely the case. Exceptions might be the immediate and unexpected closing of a library or a policy change with major impact. Have a handout—and be prepared to answer the questions you would least like to be asked.

Step 4. Select your Communications Mechanisms.

News Release or Media Advisory

Send a news release or advisory to alert news/assignment editors to announcements, events or developments of wide community interest. Both a release and media advisory should include the 5W's (Who, What, When, Where, Why) and H (How). A release should have the most critical information in the first paragraph with facts of lesser importance in descending order. Include a statement or sound bite from a spokesperson. The media advisory can be a simple outline highlighting important information, availability of spokespeople and photo opportunities. Always include a contact and website for further information. Follow up with a phone call to make sure the piece was received, to pitch coverage for the event and to answer any questions.

Non-library Publications

Consider where your target groups, including your partner organizations, get their information. Ask if they would be willing to carry news or feature articles about the library in their newsletters or magazines. Offer to supply articles for legislators' district newsletters, the campus newspaper, alumni magazine, parent-teacher organization newsletter and other publications.

Op-eds and Letters-to-the-Editor

Op-eds and letters-to-the editor provide a forum for readers to express their views. Op-eds are guest opinion columns that appear opposite the paper's own editorials. Call the editor of the op-ed or editorial page and explain your idea briefly. Explain your library affiliation. Also ask about length—most op-eds are about 750 words. When submitting your copy, include a proposed headline to let the editor know your theme, but don't be surprised if the newspaper changes the actual headline or edits your op-ed for style or length. Send a copy of any pieces that appear to others you wish to influence such as elected officials, the college board of trustees or school board. Some radio and TV stations will air guest opinions. Call the news or public affairs director to inquire.

Partnerships and Coalitions

Recruiting other organizations with common concerns to endorse your position and publicize your cause is one of the most effective ways to communicate your message. Building a coalition of groups focused on a joint initiative can be particularly effective in gaining credibility and influence with legislators.

Publications

Print communications continue to be a primary source of information. Today, because of competition with other media and shortened attention spans, it's more important than ever that your publications be graphically attractive and to the point. Most libraries have a core set of publications, such as an introductory brochure, calendar of activities, annual report and newsletters for staff and the public. Be sure to include them as well as any new fact sheets, flyers or brochures in your communication strategy.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Most radio and TV stations have community calendars or public service announcements they offer free of charge to nonprofit community groups. These messages must focus on events or news of community interest. Contact information should be included.

The spots generally run around 30 seconds (75 words) but may be shorter. They are run at the discretion of the station when free air time is available, which is generally not during prime time. Your spots should be written and submitted based on the type of audience you hope to reach—don't bother sending an announcement geared to seniors to the local rock station.

Radio and Television Talk Shows

Talk show producers are frequently looking for guest speakers. Send a letter pitching your topic, its relevance to their audience and the qualifications of the guest you are proposing. Follow up with a phone call. Make sure your spokesperson understands and is comfortable with the needs of the broadcast media and is prepared to adapt the message for a particular audience and to answer any difficult questions.

Speaking Engagements

Many groups look for speakers to address timely topics and how they relate to their communities or campuses. Seeking out speaking engagements with partners such as school, campus or community groups can be a particularly effective way to deliver your message. Most libraries have a listing of community organizations. Simply send a letter or make a phone call to program chairs of groups you wish to target. Library advocates may be especially helpful, both by reaching out to groups they belong to and as knowledgeable, enthusiastic speakers.

A draft script should be provided for speakers to personalize with their own experiences and examples. There should be a clear call to action, whether it's to call public officials, share the library message with three friends or contribute funds. Handouts and library advocate sign-up forms should be provided.

Special Events and Promotions

Special events can be designed to take the library message outside the library or to bring specific audiences, such as legislators or non-users, into the library. Activities such as an exhibit at a shopping mall, a "Why I Love My Library" contest, a postcard campaign or a rally provide a hook to get media attention and help educate the public. An event may be scheduled to focus attention on new Internet training for kids, celebrate an anniversary or kick off a new building or fundraising campaign. Make sure the event supports your key message and reaches one or more audiences you have targeted.

Scheduling an event during National Library Week, Library Card Sign-up Month, Banned Books Week, Teen Read Week or other national observances can help attract media interest.

Story Pitch

Send a letter to a specific editor, producer or reporter. Briefly explain your story idea and why it's important. Include relevant examples, names of possible spokespeople and photo possibilities. Call back a few days later to check on the status and offer your assistance.

Telephone Tree

Having an established network of advocates who are willing to pick up the phone and call three friends is one of the fastest, easiest and cheapest ways to deliver your message, particularly when there's an essential vote the next day.

Web and Internet

Electronic media offer many new opportunities for delivering the library message to a wider audience. Make sure your library's website has an advocacy section with regular updates on library concerns as well as advocacy alerts, tips on how to be a library advocate and contact information for local officials. Ask partner groups to post articles or banners with links to the library's web page. Create an electronic mailing list for those who wish to receive action alerts and other news online. When posting action alerts, encourage recipients to "Please share this message with a friend."

E-Advocacy and Web 2.0

In recent years, a new trend of improved collaboration, multimedia and extremely current information has developed on the Internet. Dubbed "Web 2.0," it is by many accounts the future of the Internet.

By its collaborative nature, Web 2.0 offers myriad possibilities for bringing people together using the web, and this has been great news for advocates, who can now support and promote their causes in ways not possible before. What follows is a brief list of Web 2.0 e-advocacy resources.

Websites: The original source of information on the Internet, websites are the most accurate and reliable sources available. They are typically created by authoritative sources, and, for those websites that have attained a reputation for excellence, they are quite often the best sources for information on advocacy: where to go, what to do, and how to do it.

The only drawback is that many websites aren't able to update their content as often as the news may demand. This can happen because only a handful of people—or sometimes even just one person—have control of a site's content, and often that person has purview over many other web pages as well.

With that in mind, many have turned to blogs for the most recent information.

Blogs: What draws most people to blogs is their relevance and up-to-the-minute accuracy. Checking certain blogs on an hourly basis has become the norm for those interested in advocating for a cause, because the administrators of those blogs follow a wide range of news sources and are very adept at compiling them. For example, someone interested in technology news would likely read TechCrunch.com, which compiles news from throughout the technology world into one easy-to-digest page.

What many people dislike about blogs is that there are so many of them out there. Indeed, it is often remarked that “everyone has a blog.” The only way to choose from the many blogs available is to do a little research to determine what blogs have developed the best reputations in the “blogosphere.” Or, as an alternative, only go to blogs that are under the umbrella of an established source, like ALA, which has a wide array of blogs on virtually all library topics.

Wikis: The fundamental element of wikis is collaboration; it is what makes a wiki a wiki and is its primary strength. For starters, a wiki is a type of web page that allows anyone to edit it. You don't need experience with web design or code; all you have to do is click the “edit” button and type away.

Wikis are ideal for projects in which input is needed from multiple parties. For example, the ALA Washington Office recently had a problem getting the most accurate and up-to-date information on federal libraries. There are federal libraries all over the country, and gathering and posting news about them all was creating a bottleneck on the Washington Office's website. To alleviate that, the office created the Federal Libraries wiki (<http://wikis.ala.org/fedlib>). Now, any of the stakeholders anywhere in the country can go to that page and update the information.

The only caveat is that a wiki's biggest strength is also its biggest weakness: because anyone can edit a wiki, the chances of false information being posted are significantly increased. In most cases, a primary editor or administrator is needed to keep an eye on the wiki and watch for inappropriate content or spam attacks.

Podcasts: Relatively new to the Internet, podcasts are simply a regularly updated audio file that is posted on a blog or website, designed to appeal to people on the go. Podcasts offer several unique opportunities. First, they give users a new way to connect with each other, especially younger ones who want their information in a new way, using iPods or other mp3 players. They also appeal to those who don't have the time during the day to read web pages but are able to download a podcast and listen on the way to work, for example.

Second Life: Second Life is also relatively new to the Internet. It's a virtual environment whereby users can create a "second life" by creating a three-dimensional representation of themselves (known as an avatar) in the online world. It has resulted in millions of people connecting with each other and created hundreds of new, real and virtual communities. Libraries are already located in Second Life, many on Cybrary City, one of several islands that are providing virtual library services. Traditional services—such as collection building, reference, and community gathering—have all been incorporated into this virtual world. In addition, the librarians of Second Life help new users acclimate themselves to Second Life and have begun hosting events and meetings.

With all that Web 2.0 has to offer, there is a way for any library advocate to get the information he or she needs, to connect with other like-minded believers and to promote those beliefs all across the globe.

Step 5. Evaluate

A number of methods can be used to evaluate your advocacy campaign. You may want to consider focus groups or surveys of community members to examine their attitudes. You will want to collect quantitative measurements, such as the number and type of media placements, number of letters to the editors and number of constituents contacting legislators.

Indicators might include:

- Has funding improved?
- Did the law pass?
- Did demand for a particular service increase?
- Does the library enjoy greater prestige?
- Did you receive editorial support?

- Did you get requests after items appeared in the media?
- What type of comments did you receive or hear?
- Did you build your advocacy network?

If your goal is the passage of legislation or a library bond issue, it's easy to tell when you've had a successful campaign. Make sure to follow up with plenty of publicity and thank all the people involved in fully achieving your goal. If the campaign or some aspect of it was not successful, analyze the process. Ask decision makers what happened. What essential elements were missing? Were you unable to mobilize important support groups? What supporters will you need for next time? Was your timing off? Remember that advocacy is an ongoing process. The answers to these questions may make the difference in future advocacy efforts.

Developing Your Action Plan Worksheet

What is the goal of your campaign?

What are your objectives?

What are the key messages? (10-15 words)

Who is the audience?

Why is this important to them?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What do we want the audience to:

1. Think?
2. Feel?
3. Do?

Three supporting points:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples, stories, and facts that support this message:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How will we determine the success of our campaign?

Speaking Out

For any advocacy campaign to work, there must be spokespersons who are knowledgeable and skilled in delivering the library message. That spokesperson may vary with the audience and medium. Every library should have a policy that defines who speaks for the library and when. The library's chief spokesperson on policy matters is generally the library director or board president. Heads of departments, such as youth services or reference, may be designated spokespersons in their areas of expertise. Librarians and other staff are generally most effective when speaking as authorities on library and information services and as "expert witnesses" who know and understand the needs of library users. Trustees, Friends and library users can be especially useful when giving testimony before public officials. The president of the Friends or library advocates' network may be asked to address specific issues. In the broadest sense, all library advocates are spokespersons, whether they are speaking to their neighbors, fellow students or faculty or religious groups. Many people are naturally gifted at speaking with the media or to groups. Not everyone is good at both. Try to use your spokespersons where they feel most comfortable and can be most effective. Media and spokesperson training can help build their confidence and polish presentation skills. Whoever speaks for the library should feel prepared and enthusiastic about doing so.

Telling the Library Story

A few carefully chosen statistics can be impressive, but stories bring the library message to life. The most valuable stories are not about what the library does. They are about the people who use and benefit from our libraries. They are the inventor who did his research at the university library, the student who

talks online to a scientist at the North Pole, and the grandmother who sees her new grandchild for the first time online at her library.

Library advocates have their own stories about how the library has made a difference in their lives. Thank you letters can be a good source of library stories. So can Friends and users. One library asked library school students to spend a Saturday interviewing library users. Every library should have cards placed strategically to make it easy for patrons to share their "success stories." Some people thanked ALA for sponsoring its "Libraries Change Lives" contest and giving them an opportunity to share their stories. Sharing these stories in testimony before governing bodies, interviews with reporters or conversations with the college president, school principal and other leaders is one of the most powerful ways to make the case for library support. Stories can also be a dramatic way to open or close a speech.

Tips

- Keep it simple, brief and personal.
- Have a beginning, middle and end.
- Have a good "punchline."
- Do not use real names unless you have been given permission.

Example

The children's book *Dinosaurs Divorce* was challenged in one library by a parent who felt it might be distressing to children. However, one little girl wrote a letter to her library saying that book helped her to stop crying because it made her realize that she wasn't responsible for her parents getting divorced. What if that little girl hadn't been able to read that book?!

Speaking Successfully

Speaking to groups is one of the most effective ways of reaching out to others to share your concerns and request their support. The best speakers know the library message and can deliver it in a way that addresses the needs and interests of various audiences and media. Most important, they aren't afraid to let their enthusiasm show. Although a script may be provided, it's imperative that speakers take time to add their own stories and examples and to make any changes appropriate for the group they are addressing. Special training in presentation skills should be provided to all members of the library speakers' bureau. This training should include the use of handouts and aids, such as a video or PowerPoint presentation, but it should focus on speaking passionately and persuasively about advocacy. Although visual aids may enhance the message, they are no substitute for a dynamic speaker.

Tips

- **Personalize your remarks.** Find out about your audience: who will be there, how many and how old they are, as well as their education, income and any special interests or concerns they may have about the library.
- **Be prepared** to answer possible questions, especially the ones you'd rather not answer.
- **Speak in terms of benefits** to your audience—why should they care if their library's budget is cut?
- **Follow the "golden rule"** of public speaking: Tell your audience what you are going to tell them, then tell them, and then, in your conclusion, tell them what you told them.
- **Practice** a conversational style of delivery that will allow you to look at the audience most of the time. It's a good idea to have a script (in large print) or notes. It's not a good idea to read your remarks. Cut out the jargon—your average library user has no idea what millage is!
- **Have a clear message** and call to action. Stick to three main points. Tell the audience why your message is important to them and what it is exactly that you want them to do.
- **Tell stories, your own and others.** Read a touching thank you letter to the library or share your a story about how the library deeply affected your own life, explaining how you became a library advocate.
- **Use visual aids** when appropriate. Cartoons, newspaper clippings and charts can help tell the story—but do not overdo the visuals. Practice using video, overhead transparencies or PowerPoint presentations beforehand. Arrive early to check equipment.
- **Show your enthusiasm.** That is what "sells" the message.
- **Keep your remarks brief,** about 20 minutes plus questions.
- **Thank the audience** members for the opportunity to speak, for being good listeners, and for their support.

Speaker's Checklist

Preparing the Presentation

I will:

- Analyze my audience and prepare my key messages.
- Plan my introduction and conclusion.
- Prepare an outline with supporting points and benefits, stories and examples.
- Plan handouts and visual aids.

Dealing with Anxiety

I will:

- Write out my speech.
- Make notes in margins.
- Rehearse the speech.
- Visualize myself giving a successful presentation.
- Arrive early, check out the room and test equipment.
- Breathe deeply just before speaking.
- Anticipate questions and prepare answers.

Delivering the Presentation

I will:

- Be aware of what I'm saying and how it sounds.
- Be enthusiastic, animated and conversational.
- Use a clear, strong voice.
- Pace my presentation.
- Talk—not read.
- Repeat questions to clarify and answer to the whole group.

Looking the Part

- Dress in a businesslike way that will make a favorable impression.

Dos

- Jacket and tie for men
- Suit with open-collar blouse for women
- Vibrant colors such as blue, teal, rose, red and burgundy
- Extra heavy makeup in your normal shades

Don'ts

- Bold plaids, large or busy prints
- Anything too trendy
- Colors that are very dark or very light
- Noisy or dangling jewelry
- A hairstyle that needs to be swept back
- Sleeveless or low-cut blouses or dresses

Remember to:

- Stand up straight.
- Look people in the eye.
- Use — but don't overuse — hand gestures.
- Keep hands at your sides when not using them.
- Smile.

Know When to Quit:

- Time your speech when you rehearse it.
- Don't go over your allotted time.
- Your goal is to have the audience want to hear more, not less.

Dealing with the Media

It's important that every library have a policy on how to deal with media calls, whether they come through the library's public information office or directly to a staff member, trustee, Friend or advocate leader.

There should be a clear understanding of who speaks for the library and when. Designated spokespeople should know or have copies of the library's key messages on various topics. They should be prepared to answer hard questions and give short, punchy quotes, known as "sound bites," that reporters need for their stories, both in print and on the air. "Kids who read succeed," "Libraries change lives" and "In a world that's information rich, librarians are information smart" are examples of sound bites that ALA spokespeople have used successfully with the media.

If you are being interviewed, remember that you are the expert. You are being interviewed because you have an important story to tell. This section contains helpful techniques that can help you deliver the message successfully in a variety of settings.

Feel free to contact the ALA Public Information Office or the Office for Library Advocacy if you have questions, need additional briefing material or there is an issue that you feel merits comment from ALA.

Tips

- **Be clear** about who you represent—yourself, your library or library association. If a host misstates your name or affiliation, gently but firmly correct him or her immediately.
- **Know your key message.** Don't feel you have to reinvent the message for every interview. You may have heard the message many times before, but chances are your audience hasn't. The goal is to give a consistent message.
- **Aim to deliver** the key message at least three times to help ensure your audience will hear and remember it.
- **Know your audience.** Find out the name and type of the publication, station or program and the type of readers or listeners it has. Ask the reporter or producer what the "angle" is. Tailor your remarks accordingly.
- **Be prepared** to answer hard questions and develop answers ahead of time. Also be prepared to answer the standard "Who-What-Where-When-Why and How" questions. Identify three talking points, a pertinent statistic, story or example to support your message. Use statistics sparingly.
- **Write your key messages,** talking points and tough questions on notecards. Review them before you do an interview. Keep them in front of you when doing radio or telephone interviews.
- **Talk in "sound bites."** This is especially important with broadcast media when you may have only about 12 seconds to respond. Your key message should be short and pithy. Practice limiting your answers to 25 words or less. If reporters want more, they will ask more questions.
- **Stay in control.** Keep your answers focused and "on message." Learn to use the techniques in the Staying in Control section.
- **Don't be afraid** to say "I don't know." Do not give inaccurate information. If you are unsure, it's better to simply say, "I'm sorry I don't know that. I'll be glad to check and get back to you."

-
- **Help** the reporter or interviewer help the audience understand. Provide fact sheets and other background materials. Suggest other spokespeople to contact.
 - **Practice. Practice. Practice.** Practice talking in sound bites and staying in control at staff and board meetings and in daily conversation. The more you do it, the better and more comfortable you'll be.
 - **Remember to smile.** It's important to come across as friendly and likable as well as professional.
 - **Stay focused.** An interview is not a conversation. It's conversational. The interviewer has a job to do. Do not let down your guard.

Staying in Control

The best way to make sure your message is heard is for you to be in control. Your goal should be to deliver your key message at least three times so your audience will understand and remember it. Skilled spokespeople can take almost any question, answer it and “bridge” back to their key central message—in 25 words or less. The following techniques are particularly useful with broadcast media. They also can be used effectively with print reporters and in other question-and-answer situations. The best way to feel in control is to practice these techniques whenever possible until they come naturally.

Tips

- **Ask questions** before you answer them. Clarify in advance the topics to be discussed and the type of audience. Ask if there are specific questions the interviewer wants answered. If you don't feel qualified to address the issue or are uncomfortable with the approach, say so. Suggest other approaches.

Refer them to the ALA Public Information Office, the ALA Office for Library Advocacy or other sources.

- **Take time to prepare.** Tell the reporter you will call back at a given time (even five minutes if the reporter is on deadline). Use this time to review the key message and anticipate questions. Be sure to call back at the agreed upon time.
- **Never answer a question you don't fully understand.** Say, “I'm not sure I understand the question. Are you asking...?”
- **Think before you answer.** Don't rush. A pause can make you appear more thoughtful. You also can buy time by saying, “That's a good question.” Or, “Let me think about that and come back to it.”

-
- **Beware of leading questions.** Some reporters may attempt to influence your answer by asking something like “Wouldn’t you say...” followed by an idea for your agreement. Answer the questions briefly followed by your own statement. For example:

Q. Isn’t it true that many colleges are closing their library buildings in favor of providing digital collections?

A. I don’t think it’s likely. Libraries are as much a part of campus life as the student union. One of the most important things librarians do is teach students how to be critical consumers of information.

- **Never repeat a negative.** Keep your answers positive. For example:

Q. Why do librarians allow children to view pornography?

A. We don’t. Our job is to help children learn to use the Internet wisely and guide them to all the great websites out there.

- **Avoid one-word answers** such as “yes” or “no.” Use every opportunity to make your point. For example:

Q. Is it true that librarians spend money on DVDs that could be spent on books?

A. That depends on how you look at it. In some cases, DVDs may be more helpful than books. Many things like learning a language or how to repair your car are easier to learn from a DVD than a book. Librarians believe people need information in all forms.

- **Focus the reporter** or listener by flagging main ideas with phrases such as “That’s an excellent question” or “The important thing to remember is...” or “The real issue here is...” or “Here are three important points...”

- **Stay “on message.”** Use every question as an opportunity to “bridge” to your message. For example:

Q. How was the weather when you left Chicago?

A. The weather was terrible. But I’m not nearly as concerned about that as I am about some very serious threats to our freedom to read.

- **“Hook” the interviewer** into listening to your most important points by saying, “There are three things your listeners should know” or “There are a couple of ways to answer that question. First...” The interviewer can’t cut you off without frustrating his or her audience.

Handling Tough Questions

By and large the media are our friends, particularly when it comes to First Amendment and freedom of information issues. But their job is to ask the questions their audience wants answered. Those questions can sometimes be tough, but reporters are seldom hostile or mean-spirited. Exceptions are some talk show hosts who depend on confrontation and argument to fuel their shows. The techniques described in the Staying in Control section are helpful in dealing with tough or hostile questions, whether in an interview or group situation.

Tips

- **Anticipate** difficult questions and develop answers ahead of time. If you know you'll be facing hostile questioning, role-play beforehand with a colleague. Answer the worst questions you can imagine. Also practice some easy ones so you won't be caught off guard.
- **Listen.** Really listen. Don't judge. Try to identify and address the real concern, fear or issue being expressed.
- **Acknowledge.** Pause to show you've given the question serious consideration. Frame your answer with a positive. For example, "You evidently have strong feelings about this," or "I respect your views, but let me give you another perspective," or "We share your concern for children, but our approach is . . ."
- **Don't repeat** negative or inflammatory words. If asked, "Why do librarians let children look at smut?" Don't repeat the word "smut" in your answer.
- **Rephrase** the question in a more positive way. Strip away the loaded words. For example:

Q. Won't the Internet put the library out of business?
A. I think what you're really asking is: "Will people still need libraries? The answer is, of course, we'll need them more than ever..."
- **Keep** your answers brief. Don't volunteer more information than is asked.
- **Be truthful.** Speak from your own experience. "In our library, we have not..." Or "My experience is..." If you are asked a question you can't answer or are surprised with an unfavorable statistic or claim, simply say "I hadn't heard that. What I do know is..." (bridge to positive statement).
- **Don't assume** anything you say is "off the record." It can and may be used.
- **Never say** "No comment." Maintain an open, positive attitude. If you are waiting for direction from your board or need time to study the issue, say so.
- **Feel free to say,** "I'd like to finish answering your last question" if you are interrupted.
- **Correct** any factual misstatements you feel are critical to the discussion.
- **Remember,** it's not just what you say, but how you say it. Keep your voice and body language calm and open (no crossed arms, tapping feet).

It may be appropriate to sound indignant or concerned. You do not want to appear defensive or out of control. A smile at the right moment can be disarming.

Dealing with Bad News

The ballot issue fails. A parent goes straight to the media after her son views “pornography” at the library. Neighborhood residents protest a branch closing.

Bad news, although never pleasant, creates opportunities for delivering a positive message and building support. For example, when a teenage hacker crashed the King County (Wash.) Library System’s computer system, closing the library down for three days, the story focused on the marvels of the technology rather than its failure, thanks to the library’s quick and thorough media response.

Some potential crises, such as organized attempts to force use of Internet filters or a branch closing, can be anticipated and planned for in advance. Others, such as crime or natural disaster, cannot. Every library should have a basic crisis communications plan for dealing with potentially negative situations. Anticipate and prepare key messages in advance when ever possible. While it’s important to mobilize quickly, be careful not to overreact. If only one small newspaper carries the story about the upset mother, respond only to that newspaper rather than issue a press release to every newspaper, radio and TV station in town. On the other hand, you should be prepared with a statement and briefing materials should you get media calls.

Be strategic in your use of media. If there has been a major disaster, you may want to hold a press briefing to communicate the facts, any new developments and the library’s response as quickly as possible to a large number of media. A letter to the editor or op-ed clarifying the library’s position can be helpful, especially if it is to correct misrepresentations of fact.

Engaging in a long, defensive battle of letters is probably not productive or a good use of advocates’ energies.

Before you accept an appearance on a radio or TV talk show, make sure you understand the nature and format of the program.

Consider the size and nature of the audience and how receptive it is to your message. Will there be someone there from the opposition? Will there be call-ins? What is the host’s position? Is the host or producer willing to guarantee a fair and equal forum? If you feel you will not be given a fair hearing, it may not be in the library’s best interest to accept. A crisis is not the time to build good media relations. Your library should have established relationships with influential members of the media to call on at such times. If the library has a reputation for open and honest communication, journalists are more likely to be receptive and helpful in communicating the library’s message.

All the basic communications and advocacy techniques are necessary when dealing with a crisis or negative publicity. These include:

- Speaking with one voice.
- Having clearly identified, highly skilled spokespersons.
- Providing briefing materials to all staff and library advocates.
- Identifying internal and external audiences.
- Developing key messages.
- Anticipating difficult questions.
- Implementing communications strategies.
- Identifying opinion leaders who can help support your position.

Tips

- **Focus on the solution**, not the problem. Explain what the library is doing to address the situation or say the library is looking for a speedy solution.
- **Apologize if appropriate.** “We apologize for any inconvenience to our users. We are doing our best to rectify it as soon as possible.”
- **Make sure** you have all the facts before issuing a response. Emphasize to staff and advocates the importance of being forthcoming with relevant information.
- **Prepare briefing materials** as quickly as possible. Present the facts, as you know them. If a branch closing was forced by a potential deficit, say so.
- **Let lawyers review** any public statement on issues with legal implications but avoid legalese and jargon.
- **Avoid reading** official statements, which can sound cold. Have spokespeople memorize and speak your key messages and talking points.
- **Prepare** one-page message sheets that include key messages, talking points and answers to the most difficult questions.
- **Offer special briefing** sessions and media training for spokespeople who will be on the frontlines dealing with this issue.
- **Stick to the high road.** Do not criticize or get personal with your opponent. Do not be defensive. Stay focused on your key message.

Broadcast Media

To be effective on radio or TV, library advocates must understand the unique needs of each medium. For radio interviews, voice quality and expression are important. Use your voice to project enthusiasm, even a smile. Try to picture the audience and speak directly to them.

Viewers have high expectations of how television guests should look. A polished appearance and presentation add to your credibility. Hand gestures make you appear more dynamic and help reinforce main points.

Keeping your eyebrows raised makes you appear more open and honest. Avoid the closed body, and do not appear with your arms folded and legs crossed. Keep hands in your lap, with your palms up so you can easily gesture.

When dressing, avoid harsh colors such as black, navy, white or bright red. Rich colors such as bright blues, rust, wine or purple are flattering for most women, as are charcoal gray or brown for men. A suit and blouse with an open collar is flattering to most women. Avoid dangling earrings or necklaces that distract from what you are saying. Both women and men should avoid fussy prints in blouses, shirts or ties. Props such as a book, poster or large photo can add interest. Be sure to look at the interviewer—not the audience or the camera, unless you are doing an interview by remote.

Summary: An Effective Library Advocate . . .

- Is informed and articulate.
- Is available at a moment’s notice.
- Is not afraid to speak out.
- Is well connected.
- Knows the message and key audiences.
- Talks in sound bites.
- Stays in control.
- Tells stories.

Dealing with Legislators

Whether you do it in person, by phone, email or letter, communication is necessary for good relations with public officials—not just when your library’s funding comes up for a vote, but on a regular basis so the lawmaker can become familiar with library issues and trends. The first step should be a face-to-face meeting if at all possible. Keeping legislators informed about library concerns, trends and successes is the best way to turn them into supporters and even library champions. Invite them to participate in National Library Week and other special events that showcase the many resources and services available in libraries today. Send letters or emails to alert them to library issues you are concerned about. Send the library newsletter and other publicity materials. Send a letter highlighting library resources of special interest to a legislator and expressing your desire to be of service. Include a business card with the library’s address and telephone number, website and email. Be sure to thank legislators for their ongoing support.

Although many people are intimidated or put off by having to compete for the time and attention of legislators, lobbying or advocating for a particular cause is the American way. Politicians are busy people but they welcome their constituents’ input, both as a way of gauging community opinion and learning about issues with which they may not be familiar.

The American Library Association maintains an Office for Government Relations and Office for Information Technology Policy in Washington, D.C., to help educate legislators and to monitor issues that relate to libraries and information access, such as copyright, government information and publications,

and the Internet and electronic information. To stay current with national issues, you can subscribe to the ALA Washington Office’s electronic newsletter ALAWON or click on the Take Action button at www.ala.org (see Advocacy Resources p. 36).

Tips

- **Start with legislators** you know support libraries. Keep them informed as your issue or legislation moves forward.
- **Recognize** that public officials can’t be experts on everything. Be prepared to provide them with information or referral sources.
- **Stick to one issue.** Decision makers do not want to listen to a laundry list of issues.
- **Do your homework.** Find out what you can about an official. Link the library message to something you know that relates to their special interest or cause.
- **Develop relationships** with federal, state and local lawmakers. A growing number of federal policy issues have a direct impact on libraries and their users.
- **Get to know staff.** Legislative staff members can be very powerful. If convinced about your issue, they can become important allies. Staff members change frequently. Be sure to stay current. Offer to brief new staff on library issues.

-
- **Don't give misinformation.** If you don't know the answer or have the information at your fingertips, promise to get back to the lawmaker as soon as possible.
 - **Be personal.** Share your own real-world stories about your library.
 - **Seal the deal.** Be direct about what you want and try to get a commitment.

Know Your Legislator

The more you know about a legislator or official, the more effective you can be in communicating the library message and ensuring a successful outcome from your advocacy efforts.

Some legislators are more important than others because they control more votes, sit on important committees, are members of the governing body's power structure or leadership or are considered experts in a particular area. When deciding which legislators to approach, always ask yourself who can make or break this piece of legislation.

Policymakers who hold appointments on critical committees should be targeted first. After all, if your bill doesn't make it out of committee, it will never be voted on. Committees that often consider issues that affect libraries include:

- Ways and Means
- Appropriations
- Education
- Urban Affairs
- Judicial
- Commerce

Shaping the Message

To be effective, your message should show how the proposed legislation or policy benefits or harms the lawmaker's constituents. Be clear about what you are asking (vote for or against a particular measure, persuade other committee members to support your side, co-sponsor a bill, or sign on to a Dear Colleague letter).

Who can be most effective?

Selecting the best person to deliver your message can make the difference as to whether you are successful. Smart legislative advocates know which legislators are most influential on any given issue. They also know the names of those who are in a position to influence the legislator. The most important person to any elected official is **a voting constituent**.

Other important people are:

- Campaign donors
- Local civic and business leaders
- Editors of local media who shape editorial opinions and news coverage
- Potential candidates who may oppose lawmakers in future elections
- Individuals who have had a positive impact on his or her life

Libraries have just about every kind of person imaginable as users and supporters. Just as politicians rank the importance of certain constituency groups in terms of their value, we need to do the same in order to know who can best champion our cause.

Know Your Legislator Worksheet

Name of official:

District:

Political party:

Political philosophy (liberal, conservative, moderate):

Date first elected:

Primary supporters (seniors, labor, business, education, etc.):

Critical areas of concern:

Position on libraries:

Library connections (family, friends, advocates):

Positions held (chairmanships, committee memberships):

Who should deliver the message? How?:

The issue:

The message is: (25 words or less)

Three key points:

1

2

3

This is important to your constituents because:

We need you to: (call for action)

Ways to Communicate

There are many ways to communicate with legislators. These include:

Personal Visits

A face-to-face visit with the lawmaker is the most effective means of communication. It is essential to establish a comfortable working relationship with your elected officials. Schedule a meeting when the governing body is not in session, so there is less competition for the legislator's time and attention. Call the local office to make an appointment, if possible at the library so you can highlight what's happening in your operation. Always call ahead to reconfirm your appointment. (See *Tips for Successful Visits*.)

Telephone Calls

Once you have established a relationship, telephone calls are appropriate and easy. Regular contact with staff is possible and desirable. When should you call? Call to ask support before a hearing or floor vote. You also may make an annual call or visit to keep the legislator and his or her staff informed of trends and problems that have surfaced during the year.

Letters

Letters are the fuel that powers the legislative process. They are read. Letters elicit responses. They represent votes. Each letter writer is deemed to represent several like-minded, if less highly motivated, constituents. Letters may be formal or informal, typed or handwritten. They should be composed by you, giving reasons for your position and how it will make a difference for the lawmaker's constituents.

It is now preferable to fax letters to Congressional offices rather than sending through the U.S. Mail because new security procedures keep the U.S. postal service from being delivering mail in a timely manner.

Email

Email is a good option, particularly when time is of the essence.

In general, the best option is to call the official's office and ask which method of communication is preferred. It's a good idea to call in advance and keep a list of names and numbers handy for quick action.

Tips for Effective Letters

Whether you send a letter or email, legislators want to hear from their constituents. A well-written letter lets them know you care and can provide valuable facts and feedback that help the official take a well-reasoned stand.

- **Use the correct form** of address (see *Forms of Address*).
- **Identify yourself.** If you are writing as a member of your library's board of trustees, as a school librarian, officer of the Friends or college administrator, say so.
- **State why** you are coming forward. Let your elected officials know you believe all types of libraries are central to our democracy and that you are counting on them to make sure that all libraries—public, school and academic—have adequate funds and resources.

- **Be specific.** Cite a bill number or other identifying information. Give examples. If budget cuts have forced your library to cut book and journal budgets or students are graduating without necessary information literacy skills, say so.
- **Write from the heart.** Avoid clichés. Form letters that look like they're a part of an organized pressure campaign don't have as much impact as a personal letter.
- **Focus on the people** who depend on library services. Include real-life stories or examples of how the library makes a difference in the lives of constituents.
- **Be brief.** A one-page communication is easier to read—and more likely to be read.
- **Be sure to include your name,** mailing address and telephone number in the letter, not just on the envelope. If the letter gets separated from the envelope, the legislator may not be able to respond.
- **Extend** your communication's impact by sending copies to city councilors, other members of Congress and relevant state and local officials. Be sure to send a copy to your library's advocacy coordinator, the ALA Office for Library Advocacy and ALA's Washington Office if appropriate. Also let them know any response you receive.
- **Be strategic.** Know the budget cycles for various governing bodies. Send letters early to maximize their impact. ALA and many state associations will issue action alerts on timely issues.

Forms of Address

Make sure to properly address the legislator that you're contacting.

United States Executive Branch
 The President of the United States
 The White House
 Washington, DC 20500
 Email: president@whitehouse.gov

The Vice President of the United States
 Executive Office
 Washington, DC 20500
 Email: vice.president@whitehouse.gov

Congress

Note: For email addresses, see your legislator's website or the ALA Legislative Action Center at www.capwiz.com/ala/home

Senators

The Honorable _____
 United States Senate
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Representatives:

The Honorable _____
 United States House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515

State

Governors and Lieutenant Governors
 The Honorable _____
 Governor (Lt. Governor) of the State
 State Capital
 City/State/ZIP

Tips for Successful Visits

Preparation and planning are necessary for a successful legislative visit. That means having the right message to deliver to the right legislator by the right advocate at the right time. Many of the techniques described in *Staying in Control* may be useful in dealing with public officials—while sympathetic, they may still ask hard questions.

- **Keep the delegation**—librarian, trustee, Friend or other supporter—**small** enough for an easy exchange of views. Every member of the delegation should be a voting constituent if possible. Designate a chief spokesperson and decide in advance who will speak when and what he or she will say.
- **Be on time.** Legislators' schedules are hectic. If you are late, you may miss your window of opportunity.
- **Be sure to give examples** and tell library stories from the legislator's district.
- **Dress comfortably** and professionally. It may be a long day of visits, but you need to be alert and fresh for each contact.
- **Be positive.** Most legislators and staff are committed, conscientious public servants, whether they agree with you on a particular issue. Don't convey negative attitudes about other government officials, the political process or other types of libraries.
- **Know your message.** Refer to local library and constituent needs. Small talk is fine, but don't allow yourself to be distracted by talking about the weather or mutual acquaintances. Stay focused.
- **Be assertive** but polite. Ask, don't threaten or demand. Always appear appreciative.
- **Remain calm**, no matter what. If a legislator asks a difficult question that isn't germane to the legislative issue being discussed, try saying, "This is an important issue. Could I quickly talk about this bill and then come back to your question because we'd really like to get your perspective?" Most legislators will accept this approach. If he or she insists on proceeding, practice techniques for handling tough or hostile questions.
- **Don't get discouraged.** If the legislator is called away or is unavailable and you end up meeting with a staff member, take advantage of the opportunity to become better acquainted. Staff members often determine how a legislator votes on a particular bill, so gladly make your "points" with them.
- **Be appreciative.** Express your thanks for past support, as well as asking for help with current issues.
- **Don't overstay** your welcome. Stay on message and answer questions succinctly. Be sure to leave your business card and a concise briefing statement.
- **Follow up** with a thank-you letter that reiterates the important points relating to the issue. If appropriate, let the ALA Washington Office or your state library association know the result of your visit and if they, as well, need to communicate with that legislator.

When Is the Best Time to Talk?

As with most things, timing is everything. To be effective, you must familiarize yourself with the various stages of the legislative process, which can be lengthy.

Legislative Action Schedule

Six to Eight Months before Sessions:

- Meet in your district.
- Compile pertinent local data.
- Offer model language/concise legislation.
- Train advocates.
- Invite potential supporters to the library.
- Identify allies and collaborators.

When the Session or Budget Cycle Begins:

- Look for the library provisions in proposed legislation.
- Lobby to amend or delete unacceptable language and concepts.
- Visit legislative offices when you need to provide information or educate.
- Monitor library legislation and keep advocates informed.

- Know when appropriate committees are meeting and time advocate visits and media outreach, (for example, op-eds, editorial board meetings, letters to the editor) accordingly.

- The president generally submits his proposed federal budget to Congress in early February. Watch ALAWON for updates and action needed.

Throughout the Session:

- Indicate your preferences on legislation of concern.
- Learn from your mistakes and adjust your strategy.
- Ask for feedback.

After the Session Ends:

- Attend fundraisers.
- Thank the legislators who have met or communicated with you.
- Invite lawmakers to visit the library.
- Give recognition awards and gear up for re-election time.

Before Re-election Time:

- Identify legislators and policymakers who supported you.
- Invite candidates to the library to meet staff, users and advocates.
- Organize and publicize the library agenda.
- Encourage candidates to include libraries in their "platform."
- Cultivate strategic relationships with policymakers and constituents.

During Primary and General Elections:

- Work behind the scenes.
- Focus on the most useful committees and get to know their members' interests and priorities.
- Maintain informal but ongoing contact with public officials.
- Continually introduce yourself and identify your issues.

Summary: An Effective Legislative Advocate

- Maintains contact with legislators.
- Knows how to shape the message for legislators.
- Knows who can get to decision makers.
- Understands the importance of timing.
- Writes effective communications.
- Informs and educates.
- Always says thank you.

Library Advocate's Checklist

Following are ways you can support your library. As a member of the library staff, as a Friend, as a library trustee, faculty or administrator, every day is an opportunity to confirm and communicate how important your library is to the entire community, school, or campus.

- **Talk, talk, talk!** Look around you. There are people everywhere who could use their library, and who don't know about the valuable resources just waiting for them. At the grocery store, student union, the bank, PTA or staff meetings, the post office, in dorms, while on a walk with your dog, talk to people and tell them why you love and value the library. Help them see what they could learn there, and how they can help bolster support for this cornerstone of their community, campus or school. It doesn't take much more than a friendly conversation for you to be a hero for your library!
- **Keep informed.** Stay up to date on state and national activity. Contact the ALA Office for Library Advocacy and visit the Advocacy Resource Center at www.ala.org/issues&advocacy to view the latest resources, publications and information on library advocacy, as well as sign up for advocacy discussion lists. Contact your state association for information on important issues affecting your state. (You can link to your state chapter through the Advocacy Resource Center.)
- **Get to know your representatives (and their staff members).** You've elected them; but how can you get them to help your cause? Get to know them—and their staff—first. Visit your representatives' websites to learn their issues and priorities. Invite them to your libraries and let them see firsthand how valuable your library is to the community and to academic excellence. Let them know you want them to support all types of libraries, and library-friendly policies and give them specific ways they can get involved. You can schedule an appointment by calling your legislator's office, or even better, invite your representatives to visit the library for a special event you've planned. Let them see how their constituents are using the valuable services provided by the library, and you'll gain an important ally.
- **Work on your library's print or online newsletter.** Many libraries now have a regular newsletter for patrons, students and faculty. Volunteer to write an advocacy column for the newsletter, highlighting ways that users and advocates can help the library: participating in a letter-writing campaign, volunteering at events, calling their legislators, or other means. Collecting all the valuable information in one place helps interested parties pick and choose among the many ways to help.
- **Make—and distribute—handouts.** Important information about the library, its services, and needs can be distributed in writing for people to read later or pass on to others. If you have desktop publishing skills, or know someone who does, work to build written materials that can be passed along to others. These can include the library's hours and services, a wish list of things the library needs, information about upcoming events, or any other pertinent library information. These ideas should be posted on your library's bulletin board for all to see. ALA provides a wealth of materials to help you get started through @ your library,[®] the Campaign for America's Libraries. Visit www.ala.org/@yourlibrary and click on PR Tools & Resources.

-
- **Plan a library event.** Any event during the year is an opportunity to showcase your library. Create an event or promotion that will get your Friends, trustees or other volunteers involved. You can host the event at the library or a local mall, county fair, park, or any campus venue and invite the media to attend. Visit www.ala.org/pio and click on Initiatives for information on initiatives celebrated nationwide, including Banned Books Weeks, Library Card Sign-up Month, Teen Read Week and National Library Week. Always invite elected officials to your events!
 - **You have your own built-in army of advocates.** Use it! Many people who work in libraries forget that they have a built-in army: the library staff. From library director to custodian, no one knows—and appreciates—the inner workings of your library like they do. Teach them the basics on library advocacy—share the resources ALA has to offer and keep them abreast of current events.
 - **Lobby.** Attend state library legislative days—and the ALA National Library Legislative Day, if possible. Bring Friends, trustees and other supporters. To learn about federal issues, visit the ALA Advocacy Resource Center at www.ala.org/issues&advocacy. Click on “Take Action” to contact your legislator. To learn about state issues, visit the website of your state library association.
 - **Offer Internet tours.** For those without a computer at home, the library is the number one point of Internet access. Your library can be the window to the Internet for many people in your community. Offer to show patrons how to use it, and walk them through your library’s Internet policies. You can even invite local politicians and community leaders to a community-wide Internet orientation event, and show them how the library offers everyone equal access to technology.
 - **Get press.** Speak publicly about the specific value in your library. Are you good at public speaking? Call your local or campus radio talk show or TV news show. Like to write? Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece for your local paper, or ask students and faculty to write editorials for the campus paper. However you get in touch with the local or campus press, make sure you’ve developed your key messages and anticipated tough questions ahead of time; be ready with statistics and information you can rattle off on the spot. To build your skills visit: www.ala.org/issues&advocacy and click on Tools & Publications.

- **Be your library's ambassador to the public or academic community.**

Go out into your community and do public appearances to advocate for your library. Visit your local Lions, Elks, or Rotary Club, student and faculty meetings, parent meetings at neighborhood schools, union meetings, and neighborhood watch groups—wherever people gather. Offer to speak about the things your library offers, and how many people are served there. Paint a picture of your school and community without this wonderful resource—and then enlist the help of these powerful groups in supporting the people and buildings behind it!

- **Build your network.** You are a powerful agent for change on your own, but involving more people makes your message even stronger. Developing a network of library advocates in your community or on campus is a great way to add voices to the chorus of support. When you find people who are willing and able to help, keep track of their contact information and availability. Start a phone tree or an email list to keep in touch with everyone so that when an issue arises, you'll know just who to contact to get the word out.

- **Add your idea here.** They say that necessity is the mother of invention. As you move forward in your advocacy endeavors, please let ALA know about your successes and new ideas. Send an email to advocacy@ala.org to share your experiences or tips. Your input—fresh ideas and energy—will keep library advocacy moving forward!

Resources

Events

National Library Legislative Day

Library supporters from across the nation gather on Capitol Hill each spring in Washington, D.C. For information, visit www.ala.org/nationallegday.

Online

ALA Advocacy Resource Center

Get the latest news on library funding, statistics to help you make the case for libraries, resources and materials, as well as links to advocacy initiatives throughout ALA: www.ala.org/issues&advocacy.

ALA Legislative Action Center

Check out this comprehensive web page for updates on current library and information issues, action alerts, contact information and links to members of Congress: www.ala.org/takeaction.

Library Advocacy Discussion List

Share ideas, updates and stories about library advocacy via the Library Advocacy Now! Electronic discussion list. To subscribe, go to <http://lists.ala.org>. Click on Login. (First-time users will need to get a password.) View all lists. Click on ALADWON and then Subscribe.

Washington Newsline (ALAWON)

Online newsletter from the ALA Washington Office with timely updates and action alerts on federal legislation and policies regarding libraries and information issues. To subscribe, go to <http://lists.ala.org>. Click on Login. (First-time users will need to get a password.) View all lists. Click on ALADWON and then Subscribe.

ilovelibraries.org

ALA's website for the public features articles of interest to the general public, plus book reviews and more. It tells the library story 24/7 and in that way serves as an advocacy tool for those in the library community. Visit www.ilovelibraries.org and sign up for the e-newsletter.

ALA Graphics

Colorful posters, bookmarks, pins and other promotional items promoting libraries and literacy can be purchased from the ALA Graphics Catalog or from the ALA Online Store at www.alastore.ala.org. Products purchased from ALA Graphics support the work of ALA. To request a free catalog, call 800.545.2433; press 7.

Publications

Libraries & The Internet Toolkit

Tips and guidelines for developing and communicating Internet policies. Contact the ALA Office for Library Advocacy. Available online at www.ala.org/issues&advocacy.

Quotable Facts about America's Libraries

Give these pocket-sized cards to trustees, Friends and advocates to quote at a moments notice. Print copies available in packs of 100 for \$25, or download free of charge at www.ala.org/issues&advocacy (click on Tools and Publications).

Trainings

Advocacy Institutes and Trainings

Workshops are being made available to local, regional and state library groups at no or minimal cost (for travel). Topics include tips and techniques for building an advocacy network, being an effective library spokesperson and dealing with legislators and the media. Programs can be structured to focus on information literacy, the Internet and legislative advocacy or for special audiences (e.g., trustees, Friends of the Library). Contact the ALA Office for Library Advocacy.

Contacts

ALA Office for Library Advocacy

50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
Telephone: 800.545.2433, ext. 2431
Fax: 312.280.3255
Email: advocacy@ala.org
www.ala.org/issues&advocacy

ALA Public Information Office

50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
Telephone: 800.545.2433, ext. 5041
Fax: 312.280.5274
Email: pio@ala.org
www.ala.org/pio

ALA Washington Office

1615 New Hampshire Ave NW
First Floor
Washington, DC 20009-2520
Telephone: 800.941.8478
Fax: 202.628.8419
Email: alawash@alawash.org
www.ala.org/washoff

Association for Library Trustees and Advocates

American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
Telephone: 312.280.2160
Fax: 312.280.3257
Email: alta@ala.org
www.ala.org/alta



American
Library
Association
**Library
Champions**

Investing in America's Libraries

This publication is made possible by the **Library Champions**, ALA's highest level of corporate members, who support public awareness and advocacy for America's Libraries: www.ala.org/librarychampions.

To learn more, please contact the ALA Development Office at 1.800.545.2433 or by e-mail at development@ala.org.