

Creating a Library Story

Reminders & Tips

- ✓ Remember there are important story elements that will help you create effective library stories:
 - Your main advocacy message or messages
 - Anecdotes about individuals, events, or specific library activities
 - Quantitative data (important statistics, impact data) and programmatic information

- ✓ It is important to keep in mind that different target audiences have different perceptions of the library and will respond to library stories that are relevant to their interests and priorities.

- ✓ Library stories can be told in different ways that appeal to different audiences. The following are three types of stories:
 - **Factual stories** focus on quantitative data (important statistics, impact data) and programmatic information.
 - **Anecdotal stories** are stories about an individual, event, or specific activity.
 - **Inspirational stories** provide an emotional connection for your audience that can inspire engagement.

All three story types can also be combined into an **integrated story** approach, which normally has the widest target audience appeal.

- ✓ A good story will have the following elements:
 - A beginning, middle, and an end.
 - A clear call to action.
 - A central fact, anecdote, or example that anchors the story.



Reporter Outreach Reminders & Tips

The following are general reminders and tips for reaching out to reporters to interest them in your library story:

- ✓ Do your homework. Know what interests the reporter and what you want to say. Remember, reporters are usually very busy. It is important to be prepared when you talk to them, so you can quickly convince them why your call is important.
- ✓ Be concise when pitching your library story.
- ✓ Start with the message you think is most important and most likely to interest the reporter you are speaking to.
- ✓ Be enthusiastic about your event/story.
- ✓ Be persistent. If you do not get in touch with the reporter right away, try again.
- ✓ It is okay to email, or even text message, reporters. Sometimes that is the best way to reach them. Do not call to see if an email or text message was received.
- ✓ Do not leave a long phone message with your phone number at the end; they may not listen to the entire message. Instead, say your name and number first, then leave a brief message about the library news story you would like them to cover.
- ✓ Do not read from a prepared script when you are talking to a reporter. You should have your pitch points and additional supporting information in front of you when you talk to a reporter for reference, but you do not want to read verbatim your pitch points. Instead you want to have a conversation with the reporter based on the pitch points you prepared.



YOUR FRONTLINE ADVOCACY PLAN

WORKSHEET

Library Location/Department _____

1. What is your goal? (What are you trying to accomplish?)

2. What are your objectives? (Why is it important?)

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-
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-
-

3. What are your strategies? (the activities you'll do to accomplish your goal)

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-
-
-
-

Every Voice Makes a Difference: Frontline Library Employee Advocacy

2010 PLA Annual Conference, Portland, Oregon

Eight Steps to Getting Started -- Worksheet

- 1. Create a dialogue**
- 2. Create a task force**
- 3. Decide on a simple message**
- 4. Determine ways to communicate the message**
- 5. Infuse frontline advocacy into everything you do**
- 6. Train staff**
- 7. Devote time**
- 8. Evaluate**

Ten Action Steps for Frontline School Advocacy

Everyone who is a frontline staff member of your school library media center can follow the Ten Action Steps below. Don't stop there! Urge parents, teachers and administrative personnel to get on the bandwagon too.

1. **Involve**

Build an army of advocates – your front line! Form an advocacy team. Look for untapped resources (civic groups, local businesses, librarians who work for other kinds of libraries). Bring parents, student volunteers, teachers and administrative staff on too. Brainstorm with each group about how they can be effective advocates for your school library, then write up their ideas in an action plan. When you involve others in the process, they become invested in it and feel ownership.

2. **Teach**

Work with your advocacy team to create a simple, compelling and convincing message that is easy to say and deliver. Be sure your advocacy team understands reason(s) for the message. Teach them how they can deliver the message effectively and how to respond to questions about the resources that your library media center has to offer.

3. **Inform**

Get creative! Help your advocacy team make book marks, stickers, cards and other freebies to hand out, and give them to everyone at school. Address advocacy issues at every staff meeting. Create Q&A scenarios that will help other members of your school's staff understand the library's message and work to help spread it. Have someone on your advocacy team write a letter or short article for your community newspaper.

4. **Illustrate**

Design a badge or button with your library media center's message and have frontline workers and your advocacy team wear them. Have staff use screensavers and banners to highlight special messages on their computers, especially those that others can see. Keep the library website fresh and current with the library's message. Model best practices by ensuring a clean, lively, interactive, resource-rich learning environment for students.

5. **Encourage**

Tell staff to talk! Talk! Talk! Challenge them to deliver the library media center's message to three people every day – at the check-out desk, the grocery store, staff lounge, meetings, the post office, on a walk with their dog. Encourage them to think of and portray the library as the “happening place” in your school...the place where life-long learning and exploration is happening.

6. **Enlist**

Get school staff and others to help build your network by establishing and nurturing relationships with key staff in other schools.



Create a Buzz at Events

by Advocacy in Action

Last Modified: 30 June 2015

Taking part in local events is instrumental toward educating the public about library funding and local needs. Use this campaign as an opportunity to get involved with events normally not represented by the library. Surprise your community and they will take notice.

Plan ahead

- Many community events require registration or a small fee for space, so be sure to research and plan your event schedule ahead of time.
- Promote the event. Display information in the library and submit information to community calendars, and include updates on your Web site and on your online social networks. Use postcards as invites!
- Ask event organizers about anything you might need, such as tables and chairs, so you are prepared. Also, remember to inquire about any advertising or promotional opportunities available prior to or during the event, and what you need to provide. (For example, event brochures often include information about exhibitors.)
- Be sure to invite local media to stop by your booth or table. We recommend a short e-mail and a follow-up call prior to the event, or mail postcards.
- Research approximate attendance and make a list of the materials and number of staff/volunteers you will need. (A good guideline is to have enough material for approximately 1/3 of the attendance amount.) Be sure to schedule adequate staff and volunteers, allowing time for staff breaks and rotation.
- Discuss options and make a plan for how you set up the booth/table.



(<https://www.webjunction.org/topics/advocacy-in-action/encourage-action.html>)

Related Topics

[Advocacy](https://www.webjunction.org/topics/advocacy.html)
(<https://www.webjunction.org/topics/advocacy.html>)

giveaways.

- People who love libraries love bookmarks. Print cards with local funding information that the public might not know and use a paperclip to attach a bookmark. Give them to all interested event goers.
- Use biodegradable bags printed with campaign/library information for the giveaways—they help garner interest at the event as walking billboards. Make sure they are manageable for people to carry. Include something as simple as the handout, a bookmark and a piece of candy.

Document Your Success

Hire a photographer or ask staff to take pictures or video, and upload them to your Flickr account, and [add to the Geek the Library Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/groups/geekthelibrary/) (<https://www.flickr.com/groups/geekthelibrary/>) group.



When taking and sharing photos or video, be sure to:

- Follow normal library guidelines for photography. It's a good idea to always post photo release signs around the event to make sure people are aware that photos may be taken and used for marketing purposes.
- If you take individual photos, it's important to get a signed individual photo release from each person who is photographed. (Please use our photo release documents as guides.)

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Why Libraries?

The nation's largest public libraries anchor communities and serve as hubs for economic and community advancement. They provide critical resources across employment, health, information access, civic engagement and social services for jobseekers, small businesses, immigrants, seniors, families with children, students and those bridging the digital divide.

What is Needed



Infrastructure

Libraries are essential public infrastructure that **need to be preserved for future generations**. Building tax credits, historic site preservation designations and new state block grants will help libraries continue to serve their cities.



Workforce Development, Digital Inclusion and Economic Mobility

From the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act reauthorization to funding for small businesses, entrepreneurship, skills development, workforce training and home broadband, supporting libraries in this work **uplifts the American workforce and the American economy**.



Public Health and Social Services

Urban libraries have essential mandates that are not fully recognized in federal funding opportunities, from providing access to health and mental health support to citizenship classes to supporting unhoused individuals. Support for health services, affordable housing and pathways to citizenship creates healthy communities.



Access to Information and Intellectual Freedom

These tenets are **fundamental values of democracy and individual rights**, and support for access and fair pricing for e-content and modernization of copyright law fosters an informed citizenry.



Education and Literacy

Support for after-school programs, early childhood and adult literacy, and on-ramps to community college help libraries **meet peoples' educational needs wherever they are in life**.



Public Libraries: Uplifting the American Workforce and Economy

Libraries are central hubs not only of knowledge but of the resources needed to thrive in today's **rapidly evolving job market**, from starting your own business to workforce training and skills development to **accessing high-speed internet** at the library or at home. Libraries tailor their collections and services to **support the needs of a diverse workforce**. They provide job search assistance, career development programs and resume help. They also house **small business centers** that offer tools, mentoring and co-working space to foster local economies. Additionally, adult education programs **build skills for employment**, technology, finances and more.

Computer labs and **digital literacy programs** at libraries build critical skills for school, jobs and life. Librarians are trained to offer **personalized guidance on using technology** effectively and safely. Libraries bridge digital divides by **lending tech devices and providing free Wi-Fi access**. During the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries were instrumental in improving how people got online, from erecting cellular towers to providing devices like Wi-Fi hotspots to helping eligible households receive Affordable Connectivity Program benefits. While many of these pandemic-era programs are winding down, libraries are finding new ways to ensure their customers stay connected and can thrive.

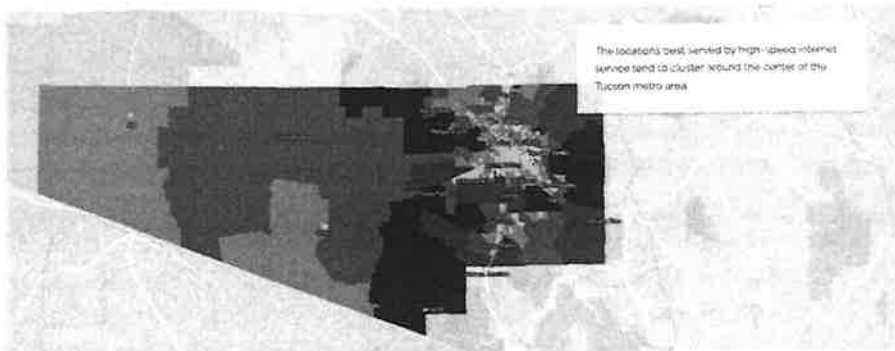
Also known as Makerspaces or DIY Labs, **library innovation hubs** allow for hands-on learning through exposure to new technologies and creative tools. These areas provide access to programs such as crafting and sewing projects, using a 3-D printer and producing your own audio podcasts or web videos.

Snapshot of Libraries Advancing the Local Economy



Pima County Public Library (AZ)

In 2021, the Pima County Public Library established the [Connect Pima taskforce](#) to address digital inequities in a community where 12% of households had no internet access. Through partnerships with local municipalities, internet service providers and community-based organizations, the library and Connect Pima taskforce takes steps to enact a united vision for digital equity and inclusion for the region. In 2023, Pima County received a \$30.3 million grant to [expand high-speed internet infrastructure](#) and increase internet access for residents in unserved or underserved areas.





Public Libraries: A Critical Anchor in the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

As trusted public institutions, libraries are finding **new and expanded roles to support their local economy, job seekers and small business owners**. Libraries lead inclusive programs focused on creating economic opportunity and social mobility.

They help community members **build personal financial stability and contribute to the local economy**. Libraries also provide job search assistance, career development programs, and resume help, as well as partner with social services agencies streamline access to workforce assistance.

A library's entrepreneurial and small business programs are often designed to **support those who face the greatest barriers to entrepreneurship**, among them, women, people of color, immigrants and those previously justice involved. Libraries offer free access to tools and resources that can be a financial burden to anyone looking to start a business.

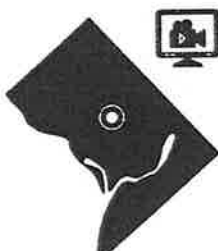
From subscriptions to business databases, business plan development software and research support to evaluate market competition, it's no surprise that a 2022 report by the Urban Libraries Council and Knology found that **“half of all new business founders (49%) had used library resources for business-related reasons at some point in their start-up process.”**

Snapshot of Libraries Supporting Local Entrepreneurs



Los Angeles Public Library (CA)

The Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) has a program for street vendors to learn business, digital and English-language skills to be successful business owners, all from their mobile phone. Street vendors are often excluded from business development resources due to their lack of access and understanding of the formal systems to operate legal businesses in Los Angeles. To address this disparity, LAPL works directly with vendors to identify their needs and partners with Cell-Ed to build micro-lessons in English and Spanish that vendors can complete on a mobile phone. Lessons include basic Internet skills; business, sales, vending; and community safety.



DC Public Library (DC)

The Labs — a maker space Fabrication Lab, a DIY digital preservation Memory Lab, and a dance rehearsal and audiovisual production Studio Lab — serve as a hub for entrepreneurship services and programs at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library in downtown Washington, DC. There are also coworking spaces at the library, where a vibrant partnership with the DC Department of Small and Local Business (DSLBD) offers one-on-one consultations to aspiring entrepreneurs each Wednesday.



www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/advocacy.html • LOCAL LIBRARY AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

POSTCARD OPTIONS

Ask supporters—in the library and at events—to pass on the funding message by sending a postcard. Use our suggestions below or customize with local information.

Option 1:

The Public Library Needs Your Support

Public libraries have helped people find jobs, reeducate themselves and transform their lives for decades, but their role has never been more critical. With high unemployment and many people cutting back on expenses, this vital resource is often the only viable option for active job seekers. Public libraries help get people back to work. Talk about public library funding in your community. Your voice matters.

Option 2:

The Public Library Needs Your Support

Inadequate library funding translates into fewer books, fewer hours open to the public, fewer staff to assist residents and fewer children's programs. Your voice matters. Start the conversation in your community regarding library funding.

Option 3:

The Public Library Needs Your Support

Are library services important to you? Show your support for more public library funding. Join the debate in your community. Your voice matters.

Option 4:

The Public Library Needs Your Support

The public library services so many people depend on come at a cost. Make sure your library has adequate funding. Start the conversation about library funding in your community. Your voice matters.

Option 5:

The Public Library Needs Your Support

Your public library supports you and your community. It's time to show your support. Let others know that the library is an important community asset worthy of the community's support. Your voice matters.

Option 6:

The Public Library Needs Your Support

If public libraries matter to you, make an effort to explain to others why you and your community geek the library. Remember, when it comes to supporting the library, your voice can make the difference.

Option 7:

The Public Library Needs Your Support

Public libraries are a sound investment. They provide support for individuals, small businesses, local organizations and schools. Support your community. Support the public library.

Option 8:

The Public Library Needs Your Support

Without your support, the library—and all of the materials, staff and programs your entire community depends on—are at risk. You have the power to make a difference. Start the conversation about library funding in your community. Get your geek on. Show your support. geekthelibrary.org

Sometimes it is nice to have a quick reference guide. Here are cards you can cut out and give to staff, and keep with you for those impromptu opportunities to speak with members of your community.

5 THINGS TO SAY ABOUT HOW LIBRARIES SUPPORT JOB SEEKERS

1. We have always supported getting people back to work, but the need for materials and services to help people find jobs, reeducate themselves and rebuild their lives is at an all-time high. For many, the public library provides the only free and accessible alternative for searching and applying for jobs.
2. When the unemployment rate rises, people depend on the public library for support.
3. Our staff spends considerable time with job seekers—both one-on-one and in small groups.
4. Without our job-related services, resources and trained staff, many active job seekers wouldn't have anywhere to turn for help with their job search.
5. Our wait time for computers is a challenge. Even so, patrons who hope to fill out online applications or create documents using one of our programs are thankful for this free option and personal attention.

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5 THINGS TO SAY ABOUT LIBRARIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Public libraries supply knowledge, hope and opportunities.
2. Public libraries directly affect the economic well-being of the surrounding community. Small businesses, for example, are started at public libraries every day.
3. Public libraries take an active role in helping improve both child and adult literacy—a role that has been connected with less crime and delinquency, and improved unemployment.
4. The need for materials and support services to help people find jobs, reeducate themselves and rebuild their lives is at an all-time high. For many, the public library provides the only free and accessible alternative to help them get back to work.
5. Research indicates that public libraries are a wise investment. Some studies reveal that for every dollar spent on libraries, more than four times that amount—if not more—is returned to the community.

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START THE CONVERSATION

Use these Talking Points as a tool for initiating a timely funding conversation in your community. Be sure to include any local or library statistics. (Remember, you don't have to have hard numbers; an accurate approximation or general statement about what your library and/or community is experiencing, is fine.)

Start with:

Our job is much more than giving people access to information. What we do not only transforms lives, but it also helps improve the entire community. One of the most important roles we play right now is getting people back to work. When the unemployment rate rises, job seekers depend on the public library for support. Without our job-related services and resources, many active job seekers wouldn't have anywhere to go. Now, more than ever, our community needs the public library, and we need your support!

Follow-up with:

- The local/state unemployment rate has never been higher*—at _____ there's a great deal of people looking for work. (*Please check that this statement is accurate for your local area and state.)
- My library has seen a _____% increase in patrons coming in specifically for job related resources. We often have a _____ wait to use computers.
- We estimate that we have _____ people who come in to use job-related resources every week.
- Our staff is deluged with job-related questions every day. They spend approximately _____% of their day answering these types of questions and providing job search assistance.
- Many people in our community are cutting their Internet subscriptions due to financial concerns and come to us as a free and dependable source for online job searching. We estimate that our computers are used for job searches _____% of every day.
- The days of looking for employment opportunities in the newspaper and sending a résumé via the mail are gone. Most jobs allow applicants to apply only online.
- Many skilled workers who were let go from long-term jobs and older people reentering the workforce lack computer skills. We help them with training opportunities, printed resources and personal one-on-one assistance.
- The need for job-related resources is great. As a result, we've added _____
_____ and it's not nearly enough!
- Patrons thank us every day for helping them look for and get back to work. Many say that without us, the process would have been much more difficult—if not, impossible. (If you know of a local



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Start with:

Our job is much more than giving people access to information. What we do not only transforms lives, but it also helps improve the entire community. Libraries are a sound investment that puts dollars back into the community by helping small businesses and civic organizations, getting people back to work, and providing vital resources for everyone in good times and in bad. The public library influences the growth of this community and we need your support!

Follow-up with:

- Studies connect communities with thriving public libraries to lower unemployment, higher property values and less crime. In our community, we've seen _____

_____.
- People often consider the public library when choosing a place to live. We have seen ____ growth. In 2009, we gave out _____ new library cards.
- The local/state unemployment rate has never been higher—at _____ there's a great deal of people looking for work.* We estimate that we have _____ people per _____ who come in specifically to use job-related resources. (*Please check that this statement is accurate for your local area and state.)
- Many small businesses and civic organizations rely on the library. The money they save using the library is often reinvested in their businesses, which is a win-win for the community.
- We help people start small businesses all the time—in fact, we estimate about _____ per week.
- The need for job-related resources is great. As a result, we've added _____

_____ and it's not nearly enough! Patrons tell us every day that without our services, they wouldn't have anywhere to go to look and apply for jobs.
- Many people in our community are cutting their expenses (including Internet subscriptions) due to financial concerns. We support patrons in good times and in bad.
- We are a community hub and a valued destination. In fact, we hold _____ programs every week and community organizations hold approximately _____ meetings here each week. We also circulated over

52 Ways to Make a Difference – Public Library Advocacy throughout the Year

Adapted from Dr. Camila Alore, President, American Library Association
 Presidential Initiative Chairs, Patty Wong and Julie Todaro
 September 2009

Now more than ever ALL public library employees must understand their essential role in advocating on behalf of libraries and should be able to deliver powerful messages stressing the value of libraries to gain community support for library endeavors. This critical role includes understanding the importance of advocacy; a commitment to disseminating the information through the art of persuasion and influence; and creating and delivering messages using a variety of communication strategies. As a result, employees – at all levels within the organization – should be able to motivate customers to build institutional “grassroots” support for library initiatives and the library budget; assist library administrators in representing library interests in decision making venues; and build a cohort of supporters who will advocate for libraries in their own environments throughout the organization – from the frontline to the highest administrative level.

Becoming educated about how to effectively and clearly communicate the value of libraries, including the essential role libraries play in creating and maintaining literate communities, should be a priority for all public library staff. This list of 52 ways to advocate - one idea per week for an entire year - is a roadmap to help staff get started in putting into practice their role as library advocates. The list offers a general theme for each week followed by more detailed and/or practical suggestions. As a result of making time each week to read and reflect on just one idea for advocacy, library staff will sharpen their skills in this vital area. They will build an army of supporters and advocates inside and outside of the library who can and will speak out on behalf of the Library.

Do we think you can do one each week? Weeeeelllll, maybe not; however, public libraries with multiple locations could divide up activities...libraries could pick their 12 favorites and focus on one per month...departments of a library or employees responsible for certain areas could choose their areas (ex. youth librarian could choose activities specific to or relevant to youth)...libraries could integrate these ideas into strategic planning documents...library and community partners could split up activities (ex. the library could choose 12, the Friends could choose 12, etc.)...and we know there is so much already going on out there, libraries could pick those areas that build on their existing initiatives! **Every bit counts and there is no time like the present to get started on 52 weeks of advocating for public libraries!**

| Your 52 themes! | Building your weekly themes... | Training, C.E., Professional Development |
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| <p>1. Create sustained and continuous, positive, patron and library constituent involvement through frontline advocacy.</p> | <p>Make sure your customers at the point of service from frontline employees, especially your dedicated customers, are aware of your resources and services as well as library needs and library funding - during good times and bad.</p> <p>At the point of crisis is not the best time to start advocating.</p> | <p>Pick a day this week and make a point to begin now by talking to individual patrons about the library's needs – no matter if you are in a crisis or not!</p> <p>Move those you serve from being skeptical toward becoming engaged performers, then passionate leaders and then loyal promoters and advocates.</p> |
| <p>2. Practice word-of-mouth (WoM) marketing...marketing designed to be delivered –among other ways – on the frontline.</p> | <p>Don't just tell people. Ask them to "Please tell your friends." Think of it as spreading an "idea virus."</p> <p>Use the 3 Bs to get the word out: bars, beauty shops, barber shops.</p> | <p>Develop scripts and/or scenarios training staff how to approach patrons.</p> |

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| <p>5. Promote library advocacy in general; don't wait until it's a critical need.</p> | <p>Create fliers, web pages, and podcasts advocating for libraries.</p> <p>Be sure to include information about librarians and the role of librarians in promoting such critical library programs and services such as literacy.</p> <p>Post a list on the library website of online resources on advocacy for libraries, librarians and the role of librarians.</p> <p>Put up a display about "how libraries change lives" or adopt the NLW annual theme.</p> <p>Use quotes from famous people on how libraries changed their lives.</p> <p>Encourage patrons to share their own oral history and/or stories on how libraries changed their lives.</p> | <p>Identify "quotes" in online content and then establish your clearinghouse of advocacy information to use in your theme weeks.</p> <p>Use advocacy information on your webpage; cite advocacy information and the library's role in advocacy for library, librarian and customer needs.</p> |
| <p>6. Celebrate National Library Week (NLW) at your library.</p> | <p>Use quotes from famous people on how libraries changed their lives.</p> <p>Encourage patrons to share their own oral history and/or stories on how libraries changed their lives.</p> | <p>Review ALA's annual National Library Week activities from past years and for the annual campaign.</p> <p>Take a self-paced "course in setting up oral history collections." Focus on "setting up interviews."</p> |
| <p>7. Learn to tell the library story.</p> | <p>Have a clear, memorable message. You will need a simple, powerful message, one that is easy to say and remember— about 10 words. And you should use it consistently in publicity materials and presentations. The more you use it, the more likely people are to "get it" and act. Examples: "Our community deserves a 21st century library." or "Kids need libraries as much as they need schools."</p> <p>Share the vision of the future of libraries and information whenever you have the opportunity.</p> | <p>Use best practices and assess for adaptation to your library (past annual activities) for "telling library stories."</p> |
| <p>8. Learn to tell YOUR library's story.</p> | <p>Don't stop with the state or national picture. Make an ongoing effort to keep your community informed of how YOUR library contributes and what it needs to provide the best possible service.</p> <p>Share the vision of the future of YOUR library</p> | <p>Use your oral history skills coupled with your new simple video recorder (ex. Flip video) to record YOUR stories.</p> |

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| | | <p>Take a workshop in good communication, public speaking and in presenting to groups so that you're ready to advocate whenever or wherever the opportunity arises.</p> |
| <p>12. Create slogans that advocate for libraries, librarians and the role of librarians.</p> | <p>As an offshoot of your tagline, create a slogan contest for staff for them to come up with creative slogans that advocate for libraries/ your library.</p> <p>Consider having library users come up with advocacy slogans.</p> <p>Use these slogans – in conjunction with taglines - to place on websites, podcasts or local radio and TV stations and create bookmarks to distribute.</p> | <p>Challenge individuals or groups (both small and large) to enter the contest. Interested individuals can also participate in structured processes for choosing content for advocacy initiatives.</p> |
| <p>13. Be Inclusive.</p> | <p>Make sure your advocacy materials are translated to other languages.</p> <p>Approach other language PR media outlets.</p> <p>Train bilingual staff to spread the "good word."</p> <p>If your staff is not representative of your service population, recruit advocates from underrepresented groups to speak for you.</p> | <p>Provide workshops with essential "library lingo" translated into other languages to educate employees and advocates in essential positive and targeted communication and customer service.</p> |
| <p>14. Use volunteers in the library.</p> | <p>Using volunteers provides opportunities for constituents and target populations to get to know the library – especially library frontline activities in the library. This background knowledge prepares</p> | <p>Identify individuals for management and leadership training specific to managing, leading and identifying volunteers as partners for library advocacy.</p> |

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| | <p>" Americans check out an average of more than seven books a year. They spend \$30.49 a year for the public library—about the average cost of one hardcover book."</p> <p>"Public libraries are the number one point of online access for people without Internet connections at home, school or work. 98.9% of public libraries provide public access to the Internet."</p> | |
| <p>18. Use all your PR tools to advocate for your Library</p> | <p>Use the library's website and community television stations to create "rolling" facts about the library.</p> <p>Take advantage of any type of local/national "celebrations" to include advocacy.</p> <p>Call or email the local radio or television station and pitch them a story as a "local angle" on a library topic that ties in with a national library initiative, such as National Library Week.</p> <p>Advocate through your Summer Reading Program or any other major projects such as One Book, One Community, by making yard signs or bumper stickers a prize for readers.</p> | <p>Using examples from associations and other library successes is a great process, but online tutorials on marketing and public relations are good for basic or initial learning. Staff, who would need additional or advanced training, would benefit greatly from <i>media</i> training. Media training is particularly effective for preparing employees for frontline advocacy with constituent decision makers and community media.</p> |
| <p>19. Make Customer Service a priority</p> | <p>Focus on connecting the public to your resources and services and then strive to become renowned for your excellent service.</p> <p>Take lessons from great customer service programs</p> | <p>Identify and establish tailored library scripts for employees to use for basic customer service that includes advocacy.</p> |

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| | Document and gather data about the importance of emergent/early literacy and demonstrate all the ways your library supports this vital element of youth development. | |
| 23. Team advocacy with classic, critical library values – the value of providing resources for all levels of literacy. | Although advocating for literacy should be a library value and a library focus in times of feast and famine, use economy downturns to underscore the value of the library in this area. | Training and continuing education on frontline advocacy is best supplemented with specific examples of literacy “at work” and especially the importance of family literacy. |
| 24. Team advocacy with classic literacy as well as literacy services and programs for 21 st century constituents. | Advocating for classic and 21 st century literacy programs and services makes sense as public libraries serve the broadest range of constituent interests and skills sets. | Illustrating need for both classic and 21 st century literacies is best done through hands on workshops, activities and programs. |
| 25. Team advocacy with classic, critical literacy for meeting the needs of diverse patrons | Advocating for classic and 21 st century literacy for diverse patrons makes sense as public libraries serve diverse constituents. | Illustrating need for literacy is best done through hands on workshops, activities and programs led by the same or similar peer populations. |
| 26. Team advocacy with literacy regarding meeting the needs of special needs populations | Advocating for classic and 21 st century literacy for special populations is a classic service of public libraries. | Illustrating need for literacy is best done through hands on workshops, activities and programs led by the individuals with specialized education/certification. |
| 27. Team advocacy with classic, critical library values for information literacy. | Advocating for classic and 21 st century literacy for special populations is a classic service of public libraries. | Illustrating need for literacy is best done through hands on workshops, activities and programs led by the individuals with specialized education/certification. |
| 28. Advocating to critical target populations.... childcare providers/head start | | |
| 29. Focus advocacy effort on target ESL populations to reach diverse constituent populations. | Provide library resources and services in foreign language ESL materials for use by speakers of languages other than English. Offer targeted ESL tutoring/instruction at the library. Gather and disseminate local and state best practices on services and resources targeted to ESL | Target population outreach and then advocacy training and continuing education is best delivered to ESL advocacy in small group or one-on- one and/or peer coaching, teaching and learning opportunities. |

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| | <p>Examples of advocacy space include space for literacy tutor training at your library; training and continuing education space for advocacy training for employees, general volunteers and Friends; and assess space signage for including advocacy messages.</p> | |
| <p>33. Collaborate and partner with other literacy providers in the Community</p> | <p>Develop partnerships with other literacy organizations to better serve your constituents, maximize resources and opportunities but also to educate your partners about what the library offers for critical literacy community needs.</p> | <p>Collaboration and partnership literacy relationships are best formed in person through activities that bring partners together, both informally and formally, and include both social and business networking.</p> |
| <p>34. Make literacy learning easy to increase opportunities for advocating for library vision and values.</p> | <p>Remove barriers to learning for literacy "learners." Examples include transportation assistance for adult learners; on-site childcare for adult learners; and provide mentoring for adult learners.</p> | <p>Audit your library's literacy initiatives.</p> |
| <p>35. Select advocacy initiatives that focus on library values, such as literacy.</p> | <p>Check out the American Library Association website for resources on advocacy for libraries, librarians & the role of librarians in providing literacy. Use these resources to support your frontline training program.</p> | <p>Build advocacy lists by soliciting information from staff and from constituents through focus groups.</p> |

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| <p>40. Advocating 2.0 "outside the box" –</p> | <p>2.0 brings interactivity to library websites and 2.0 allows your patrons to create their own advocacy... Flickr... streaming video...</p> | <p>Use social networking for advocacy including wiki's for planning advocacy efforts, blogs for discussion of library advocacy initiatives and for volunteers and others such as Friends groups to share advocacy successes.</p> |
| <p>41. Advocating "outside the box" walking in your shoes...switching jobs for a day/extreme marketing</p> | <p>Job sharing/job exchange opportunities although one-at-a-time (!) create lasting educational opportunities for volunteers and lay advocates to experience – firsthand – advocacy issues for libraries.</p> | <p>Set up specific criteria/an exchange program, job descriptions and job "advertisements."</p> |
| <p>42. Advocating "outside the box" doing your job...decision makers...trading places the mayor, etc.</p> | <p>Job sharing/job exchange opportunities although one-at-a-time (!) create lasting educational opportunities for decision makers to experience – firsthand – advocacy issues for libraries. "Extreme" but valuable, having decision makers "walk in librarians' shoes," provides unique experiences.</p> <p>"Extreme" but valuable, having decision makers "walk in librarians' shoes, provides unique experiences.</p> | <p>Set up specific criteria/an exchange program, job descriptions and job "advertisements" ...focus media attention on the process, individuals and outcomes!</p> |
| <p>43. Assess</p> | <p>Assess your advocacy initiatives</p> | <p>Use best practices in planning for advocacy assessment</p> |
| <p>44. What frontline advocacy worked for your decision maker population?</p> | <p>Did your frontline advocacy (designed to build networks and reach decision makers) work?</p> <p>Were your outcomes met? For example, was the budget increased? Are you getting your facility?</p> | <p>Use standard assessment practices for evaluating decision maker outreach/advocacy and - as needed – targeted assessment such as interviews and surveys.</p> |
| <p>45. What worked for your community members and a general adult population?</p> | <p>Did your frontline advocacy (designed to build a cadre of general advocates) work?</p> | <p>Use standard assessment practices for evaluating advocacy efforts of general adult advocates as well as targeted assessment such as surveys and/or dollars raised.</p> |
| <p>46. What worked for your targeted populations - young adults/teen/youth/ youth issues?</p> | <p>Did your frontline advocacy (designed to build a cadre of young adults, teen, youth and youth issues) work?</p> | <p>Use standard assessment practices for evaluating advocacy efforts of youth and teens as well as targeted assessment for this age level which would be group assessment such as focus groups.</p> |
| <p>47. What worked for your targeted population- children and children's issues?</p> | <p>Did your frontline advocacy (designed to build a cadre of children and children's issues advocates) work?</p> | <p>Use standard assessment practices for evaluating advocacy efforts of children and children's issues advocates as well as targeted assessment for this age level which would be group assessment of parents, caregivers, and older children as well as those who educate and provide social services for children.</p> |

Creating Your Library Brand

Communicating Your Relevance and
Value to Your Patrons

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|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| C=10% | M=79% | C=89% | M=60% |
| Y=72% | K=1% | '=43% | K=24% |

Elisabeth Doucett

6

The Story *Defining Your Message*

Whether you are new to the library-branding process or an old hand revising an existing brand, your brand audit should have given you a stronger sense of where your brand stands with respect to the message you are trying to convey. Specifically, your brand audit should have helped you answer the following questions:

1. Does your brand have a clear, consistent, unique message that is meaningful to your audience? This is possible even if the only component of your brand is your library's name.
2. Does your brand have attention-grabbing visual imagery that supports your brand message?
3. Is the brand used consistently?
4. Is the brand message honest?

Your understanding of where your brand stands in terms of each of these questions will direct you toward the work that needs to be done to develop your brand and make it great.

The discussion in this chapter assumes that you have discovered that your message, your visual imagery, your consistency, and your brand honesty are all missing or need work and that you must start at the beginning of the branding process. If you have received positive feedback on one or more elements of your brand as it exists today, you may prefer to read only the sections of this chapter that are most relevant to your specific situation.

The Foundation for All Branding: Your Message

As discussed previously, developing a clear, concise vision of what role your library can take in your patrons' lives is the first and most important thing you

years? Based on that, you can consider how the library might participate in its community's vision.

For example, my current library is in Brunswick, Maine. Over the next four years Brunswick will be going through a major transformation as its Naval Air Station is closed. This will result in extensive population, employment, and housing changes in Brunswick and its surrounding communities. Therefore, Brunswick is redefining itself, trying to develop a new, productive vision for the future. As my library develops its message or story, it can enhance its usefulness and relevance by defining that message within the context of the Brunswick community vision. If a library tries to develop a message that has no relationship to the community within which it is situated, then it runs the very real risk of becoming irrelevant—particularly in communities going through significant changes. So, given that Brunswick is losing population and jobs and a sizable community base, the library might decide to define itself as a community center—a place where people can come to reconnect and get information about changes taking place in the community. This role has relevance to Brunswick's citizens and makes the public library an integral part of the community's change.

There are several places you can go for information about your community's vision. If your community is a college or university, there is most likely a strategic plan that defines the school's vision for the future. If you work in a public library, you can go to your town or city offices to see if there is a comprehensive plan (which is essentially a strategic plan) that provides the basic information you need. If your town does not have a comprehensive plan, have a discussion with the town manager or other official who runs the community. If that person cannot suggest another document, you could ask for her input instead. If it ends up that you need to do interviews to get the information, make sure you talk to several key town leaders to get a range of viewpoints. If all other options fail, then have your Core Team collect and review whatever information they can and identify their own vision for your community. Sometimes library groups resist expressing a community vision because they feel that it is not their role. In fact, if no one else has identified a community vision, there is no reason why a library team would not be as qualified as any other group. Develop your own community vision and then build the library vision accordingly. At least you will have made an effort to connect your library with your community.

Developing a Message Based on Your Library's Mission or Vision

If your library has a strategic plan, you probably already have the information needed to understand your library's role in its community. If the plan

- I like this message—it has relevance to me and to my life. (True/False/Somewhat)

Consider the input you receive. It is important that the majority of respondents understand the message, think that it is appropriate for the library, and find it meaningful to their lives. If at least 50 percent of the people surveyed do not answer true to each question about a message, that message should be eliminated from consideration. If none of the messages receive good scores, it may be that your library's mission/vision statement needs to be revised before a brand message can be built from it. Assuming that at least two of your messages do ring true with your users, pick one to use as the branding message. It will then become the focal point of your marketing messages.

How to Develop a Brand Message without a Mission or Vision

If your library does not have a mission or vision, you can still define the basic information such a statement would contain to use as a framework for your branding activities. At the beginning of this chapter you learned how to get information about your community's vision for the future. Working with your Core Team, you can build on that information to move forward and develop a branding message.

Start the process by asking your Core Team to consider the information collected about your community's vision. Then ask them to articulate what role the library plays in today's community and what role they think it should play in tomorrow's community. At this point you do not have to worry about crafting a carefully defined statement. Rather, you want ideas to flow freely so that you can arrive at a general framework for moving forward. As the group works on this task, encourage them not to get too specific. Instead, help them to identify broad concepts, such as your library should be a com-



Tip

When you do your patron survey, do not allow it to be any longer than four or five questions, and keep the timeline for collecting information from your patrons short—two weeks is probably more than enough, especially if you are doing the survey online. People have a tendency either to fill out a survey as soon as they see it or to put it away and forget about it. A longer timetable just draws out the collection period, it rarely pulls in more information.

address those needs—and then use attributes as support points that reassure your patrons that you can in fact meet those needs. For example, in today’s world it can be very hard for people to find a quiet, peaceful place for contemplation and study. Thus, the library could be defined as a place for rejuvenation—mental, physical, emotional. The library is uniquely suited to fill this role, no other organization has the ability to address this need in the same way (except possibly Starbucks!), and it is obviously something that has relevance to patrons. This message is much more powerful than a listing of the library’s quiet study rooms and the number of books in the library’s self-help section. The availability of quiet study rooms and a large self-help section can support the notion of rejuvenation, but they lack the gut-level resonance that rejuvenation evokes. If you find that your message starts to look like a laundry list of services that your library offers, it is a warning to stop and rethink. I firmly believe that libraries are uniquely situated to meet some very specific needs in our society. Think carefully about these as you start to develop your message.

Writing a Tagline

Once you have defined your branding message, whether based on your mission/vision or developed independently, you will need to write a tagline. A tagline takes the internal branding message and makes it short, intriguing, and attention-grabbing to potential users of your library.

As a first step in this process you will want to develop a common language for portraying your library and its newly crafted role in your community. Ask your Core Team to get together for a brainstorming session and complete the exercise at the end of this chapter, defining a list of words that everyone agrees describe your library.

Once your Core Team has arrived at a common language for speaking about your brand, it is time to start thinking about a tagline. Bring examples



Frequently Asked Question

My library has a logo. Why do I need a tagline?

If you know your logo tells your brand story without a tagline, then you do not need one. Some logos are visually specific enough to stand on their own. However, if you have any doubts about your logo’s ability to tell your brand story—then add a tagline.

appeal to everyone, increases the efficiency of your communication. Targeting your message to a specific audience allows you to talk to them one-on-one. Imagine that you are in a crowded room with people from many different backgrounds. You can either try to talk with everyone in the room or communicate with only a small group. In most cases your communication will be more effective if you focus on a small group of individuals who can hear what you are saying, understand the language you are speaking, and relate to the message you are delivering. Targeting your message also allows you to spend your branding funds more effectively. If you had an unlimited amount of money, you could communicate in some fashion with every possible library user. However, I do not know of any libraries that enjoy that kind of funding. Typically, if we have any money at all for branding, the amount is limited and we have to be smart about how we use it. When we concentrate on a small group, we produce only the materials they require, which results in financial efficiency.

Make Sure Your Message Is Honest

For your brand message to be honest, your library must be able to do what you say it is going to do in your message, or it must be taking steps toward delivering on that promise. Never promise something you cannot deliver or are not taking steps to deliver. For example, if your library is an empty shell



Frequently Asked Question

My library has a logo and a tagline, but no one seems to remember them. What can I do about that?

The first thing you need to do is to identify the real problem. Is there poor awareness of your logo and tagline because they have not been marketed and thus people have not seen them very often, or because they are not memorable? Start by looking at how you use your logo and tagline. Do you use them consistently and constantly or only sporadically? If your use is sporadic, try employing them more regularly and then see if awareness builds over time. If that still does not seem to increase awareness, talk with your users (either directly or via a survey). Ask them what the library's brand message is and see if they can articulate it. Ask them if the brand message means anything to them. If users fail to respond appropriately to either question, you need to rethink your message.

of articulating the library's branding message. Regardless of whether you are redefining an existing branding message or defining a new one, you will need to make sure that your brand message is honest—that you do not promise more than your library can deliver.



Exercise

Objective

To develop a common language to describe your library and its role in your community as a preliminary to writing a brand tagline.

Activity

This activity can be done with the library staff, with senior managers, with board members—in short, with any group that is strongly vested in the success of the library.

1. Do some very basic research about your community's future direction. You can collect this information by looking at your town (or college's) comprehensive plan (if it has one), by talking to someone who manages your community's growth and development, or by looking at demographic projections from the U.S. Census Bureau. At a meeting with your Core Team, share this information in a consolidated format. Discuss what you think your community's direction will be over the next five years.
2. Prior to this meeting, write down possible descriptors of your library, one term per three-by-five-inch index card. Then, on more index cards write down the opposite of each term that you originally identified. A list of potential words is included in appendix A to get you going, but you may want to add or subtract words of your own.
3. Have Core Team members work individually or in pairs. Distribute the index cards randomly among the groups. Ask each group to keep the library in mind as they go through the cards quickly. Their task is to identify any words that they think describe your library and its current or possible role in the community and to eliminate any words that they do not find useful. They should spend only ten minutes on this exercise, so they need to rely on first impressions and not spend too much time on the nuances of language.
4. Each team should choose the ten words that they think best describe the library. The objective is to have a maximum of one hundred words as a