



Library  
Advocacy  
**Now!**

@your library

# 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

Library Advocate's Checklist

Advocacy Resources

ALA American Library Association



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Library Advocate's Handbook  
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# Introduction

“Isn’t the Internet 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?”

As we enter the 21st century, technology has greatly enhanced library and information services. It has also raised disturbing questions.

Library advocates have a critical role to play in answering these questions. In schools, in neighborhoods, in the halls of academia, in legislative chambers and throughout their communities, library advocates are the voice of America’s libraries.

The American Library Association’s Library Advocacy Now! training program is designed to support librarians and library supporters in delivering the library message to legislators, the media, campus, community and school officials who shape public opinion and control support for library services.

This handbook and other training materials cover basic techniques that work, whether you are seeking an increase in funding, campaigning for a new building or

dealing with controversy over Internet filters. And they can help maximize your efforts by showing you how to take advantage of the American Library Association’s programs and tools.

Offered at state, regional and national library conferences, Library Advocacy Now! training has resulted in initiatives at the local, state and federal levels that have dramatically increased public awareness and support for library services.

We must not take these gains for granted.

Librarians and library advocates have a key 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:  
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# 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**

Students, faculty, parents, seniors, business people and other library users are key 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 public understanding and advocate support. Library administrators are responsible for developing and coordinating an ongoing advocacy effort, one with well-defined roles for staff, board and Friends.

## **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, 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 key 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 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.

- **Have a clear message.** 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 key contacts with the media, administration, school board or community that might be helpful? 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/or electronic mailing list to quickly disseminate action alerts.



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## What you can do

### Librarians/library staff

- 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 key community/campus/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 Web site to local, state or national legislative issues/ concerns. Link to ALA's and your state association's advocacy Web pages.
- Recruit advocates. Hand out library advocacy sign-up cards available from the Public Information Office and/or the Association for Library Trustees and Advocates. Call/write members of the network at least twice a year to give them updated information. Invite them to subscribe to an electronic discussion list to receive updates and action alerts on library issues.

- 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 or campus groups and use this as an opportunity to tell the library story and recruit library advocates.

### Trustees

- Keep well informed about library issues such as funding, censorship, Internet filtering and information literacy.
- Make a point of getting to know the officials with decision-making power over 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 key 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 legislators and business, campus and community leaders who have lent their support. A good day would be the Tuesday of National Library Week when ALA sponsors Thank You Day.



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## Friends

- Make sure your Friends group understands what advocacy is, their role and the need to act in cooperation with the library administration and board.
- 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 Web site at [www.ala.org/washoff/](http://www.ala.org/washoff/) (see Advocacy Resources).
- 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).
- Invite key people—city council members, college administrators, businesses people, heads of organizations—to be honorary Friends. Invite them to a reception/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 concern.
- 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.

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.

Before you even put your plan on paper, you must know exactly what it is you want. Is it money? A new law or policy? Are you trying to defeat a particular piece of legislation? What will it take to make it happen? Once you have identified your goal(s), you are ready to organize.

## Getting organized

### 1. Define goals and objectives.

Identify desired outcomes: New legislation, more funding, greater visibility.

### 2. Assess the situation in targeted areas based on your objectives.

Identify barriers/ opposition/strengths/ potential supporters.

### 3. Identify critical tasks.

Key areas include:

- Steering committee
- Budget
- Volunteers
- Coordination of activities with ALA/state association
- Fundraising

### 4. Develop a communication plan.

Key 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 progress regularly.

### 6. Document and evaluate results.

This is how you learn to do it better next time.



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## Delivering the message

A key element of any public awareness/advocacy campaign is a communication plan with clearly defined key messages, target 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 good education without good libraries."

The key message should be easily adapted for various audiences—parents, business people, educators, 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.

The "Defining the Message" Worksheet is based on concepts developed by marketing expert Philip Kotler. The answers to these questions will guide development and implementation of your communication strategies.

### 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 key audience for a ballot initiative on funding. Teachers and parents are key to winning support for bigger school library budgets. Alumni may be a key audience for college and university libraries. If you do not have good relationships and have enough lead time, you may want to start building them.

If time is short, your funding tight or 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.



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### Potential target audiences

#### External:

- Library users
- Donors and potential donors
- Elected officials
- Journalists
- Other librarians
- School board members
- Civic/neighborhood associations
- College students/alumni
- Professional associations
- Teachers/school administrators
- School children
- 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 and the media. In developing your communication plan, think carefully about how best to reach your key audiences. Selecting the right strategies 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. What your neighbor tells you is more likely to be remembered than 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 key 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 key to delivering the message successfully.

In addition to identifying strategies, your communication plan should include goals for the number and timing of telephone calls to key 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, other? 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. As well as targeting 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 key 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, 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.



# Defining the Message Worksheet

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What is the goal?

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What are your objectives?

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What is the key message? (10-15 words)

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Who is the audience(s)?

---

Why is this important to them?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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What do we want the audience to:

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

---

Three supporting points:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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Examples/stories/facts that support this message:

- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
-



### **News release/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/sound bite from a spokesperson. The media advisory can be a simple outline highlighting key information, availability of spokespeople and photo opportunities. Always include a contact and/or Web site 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, PTA and other publications.

### **Op-eds/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 does minor editing 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/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.



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### **Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**

Most radio and TV stations have community calendars and/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 info 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.

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.

### **Radio and television talk shows**

Talk shows producers are frequently looking for guest speakers. Send a letter pitching your topic and 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.

### **Special events/promotions**

Special events can be designed to take the library message outside the library or to bring key audiences, such as legislators or nonusers, into the library. Activities such as an exhibit at a shopping mall, "Why I Love my Library" contest, postcard campaign or 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, Freedom of Information Day, Library Card Sign-up Month or other national observances can help attract media interest.

### **Speaking engagements**

Many groups are looking 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



### 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 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 a crucial vote the next day.

### Web/Internet

The electronic media offer many new opportunities for delivering the library message to a wider audience. Make sure the library's Web site has an advocacy section with regular updates on library concerns, advocacy alerts, tips for 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."

### 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.

Key indicators might be:

- 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 you follow up with plenty of publicity and thanks to all the people involved. If the campaign or some aspect of it was not successful, analyze the process. Ask decision makers what happened. What key 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.





# Speaking Out

For any advocacy campaign to work, there must be spokespeople 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 children's or public service, may be designated spokespeople in their area 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 effective 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 spokespeople, whether they are speaking to their neighbors, fellow students, 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 spokespeople where they feel most comfortable and can be most effective. Media/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 effective 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 school child 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, 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 distressful for 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.

Effective 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 important 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. Although such 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, how old they are, education, income, any special interests or concerns about the library.
- **Be prepared** to answer possible questions, especially the ones you'd rather not answer.
- **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.
- **Have a clear message** and call to action. Stick to three key 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 own “library story.”
- **Use visual aids** when appropriate. Cartoons, newspaper clippings and charts can help tell the story. Practice using video tapes, 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 being good listeners, the opportunity to speak and their support.

## Speaker’s checklist

### Preparing the presentation

I will:

- Analyze my audience and prepare my key message.
- 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 and 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.



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### **Looking the part**

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

### **Do's**

- Jacket and tie for men
- Suit with open collar blouse for women
- Stockings (women)
- Vibrant colors like 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 the 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 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/her immediately.
- **Know your key message.** Don't feel you have to re-invent 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/listeners it has. Ask the reporter/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/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 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 or other sources of information.
- 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.

Q. Isn't it true that many colleges are closing their library buildings in favor of online 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 things educators are re-learning is that teaching is still done best face-to-face. 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.

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 Web sites out there.

- **Avoid one-word answers** such as "yes" or "no." Use every opportunity to make your point.

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

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

- **Focus the reporter** or listener by "flagging" key thoughts with phrases like "That's an excellent question" or "The important thing to remember is..." or "The real issue here is..."

- **Stay "on message."** Use every question as an opportunity to "bridge" to your message.

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 key 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/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 before hand 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." "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.

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 (Seattle) Library System's computer system, closing the library down for three days, the story became 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 a misrepresentation 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 key 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/advocacy techniques are critical when dealing with a crisis or negative publicity. These include:

- Speaking with one voice.
- Having clearly identified skilled spokespeople.
- Providing briefing materials to all staff and library advocates.
- Identifying key 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...."
- **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.”
- **Avoid reading** “official” statements, which can sound cold. Have spokespeople memorize and speak the key message and talking points.
- **Prepare** one-page “message sheets” that include the key message, 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 critical. 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 key points. Keeping your eyebrows raised makes you appear more open and honest. Avoid the “closed body” with arms folded, legs crossed. Keep hands in your lap, palms up so you can easily gesture.

When dressing, avoid harsh colors like 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.



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## **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, e-mail or letter, communication is the key to 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 e-mails to alert them to library issues you are concerned about. Send the library newsletter and other PR 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, Web site and e-mail. 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 a legislative office 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/publications, censorship and the Internet/electronic information. To stay current with national issues, subscribe to the ALA Washington Office’s electronic newsletter ALAWON or click on the Take Action button on [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org) (see Advocacy Resources).

## Tips

- **Start with legislators** you know support libraries. Keep them informed as your issue/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 as well as local and state 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.** Don't be afraid to use charm to impress the legislator.

- **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/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 key 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/policy benefits or harms the lawmaker's constituents. Be clear about what you are asking (vote for/against a particular measure, persuade other committee members to support your side). Whenever possible, include supporting facts, examples and stories specific to the legislator's district.

Be prepared to summarize the library message in one minute or less. Time is extremely precious for public officials because of the many demands on them. It's not uncommon for legislative visits or testimony in legislative hearings to be limited to five minutes. Don't expect meetings to last more than a half-hour and often, much less.

A well-organized presentation is much appreciated by time-pressed legislators and their staffs. Well-intentioned individuals who do not stay "on message" hurt your cause more than help it.



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## Who can be most effective?

Selecting the best person to deliver your message can make the difference as to whether or not you are successful. Smart legislative advocates know which legislators are most important. 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 law makers in future elections
- Individuals who have had a positive impact on his 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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Key supporters (seniors, labor, business, education, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Key areas of concern

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Position on libraries

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Library connections (family, friends, advocates)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Positions held (chairmanships, committee memberships)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Who should deliver the message? How?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





# Shaping the Message Worksheet

The issue:

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The message is: (25 words or less)

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---

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Three key points:

1

---

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2

---

---

3

---

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This is important to your constituents because:

---

---

---

We need you to: (call for action)

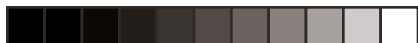
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# Ways to Communicate

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/staff informed of trends and problems that have surfaced during the year.

## Letters

These are the fuel that powers the legislative process. Letters 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.

## E-mail, fax, telegrams

These are all options, particularly when time is of the essence. Although e-mail is still not popular with some officials, it is growing in acceptance. Follow the Tips for Effective Letters, but keep your message brief. 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

Legislators want to hear from their constituents and to be perceived as responsive. 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 cliches. 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 letter 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.
- **Compound** your letter's impact by sending copies to city councilors and members of Congress and other officials. Be sure to send a copy to your library's advocacy coordinator and to the 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

The President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500  
E-mail: [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

The Vice President of the United States  
Executive Office  
Washington, DC 20500  
E-mail: [vice.president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:vice.president@whitehouse.gov)

### Congress

Note: For e-mail addresses, see the legislator's Web site or the ALA Legislative Action Center at <http://congress.nw.dc.us/ala/index.pl/>.

#### 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



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## Tips for successful visits

Preparation and planning are the keys to 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, who while sympathetic, 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 /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 or not 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/collaborators.

### When the session/budget cycle begins:

- Look for the library provisions in proposed legislation.
- Lobby to amend or delete unacceptable language/concepts.
- Visit legislative offices when you need to provide information/educate.
- Monitor library legislation and keep advocates informed.
- Know when appropriate committees are meeting and time advocate visits and media outreach, i.e., 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.



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**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 legislator/s.
- Invite lawmakers to visit the library.
- Give recognition awards and gear up for re-election time.

**Before re-election time:**

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

**During primary and general elections:**

- Work behind the scenes.
- Focus on key 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 key legislators.
- Knows how to shape the message for legislators.
- Knows who can get to key decision makers.
- Understands the importance of timing.
- Writes effective communications.
- Informs and educates.
- Always says thank you.



# Library Advocate's Checklist

Each of us has countless opportunities to speak out for libraries in our daily lives. Speaking out now will strengthen today's libraries and help to ensure free and open access to information for future generations. Thank you for your support.

## I will:

- **Contact my librarian**—school, public, academic or special. Find out what the library needs and how I can help.
- **Stay informed** about policies and decisions that affect libraries and public access to information. Subscribe to the ALA Washington Office online newsletter ALAWON (see Advocacy Resources).
- **Speak up** at every opportunity. Share my concerns about libraries and free access to information with my friends, neighbors and co-workers.
- **Suggest libraries** as a program topic to community or campus groups that I belong to—the PTA, Faculty Senate, and Chamber of Commerce.
- **Attend local government** and school board meetings. Recruit others to express their support.
- **Call in** to local radio or TV talk shows. Involve the library in discussions of employment, education, the Internet and literacy.
- **Write letters** to the editor or an op-ed in support of the library.
- **Call, write, visit or e-mail** to voice my concerns to school board members, college administrators and city, county and state officials.
- **Attend library legislative days** in my state or Washington, D.C. (Ask your librarian for information.)
- **Recruit others** to be library advocates.
- **Join or start** a Friends of the Library group. Contact your state library association or the ALA Washington Office and volunteer to be part of its legislative network.
- **Support** the American Library Association's national campaigns. Libraries of all types benefit from greater public awareness at the local, state and national levels.



# Advocacy Resources

## Available from the American Library Association (ALA)

### 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](http://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](http://www.ala.org/issues&advocacy).

#### ALA Legislative Action Center

Check out this comprehensive Web page for updates on key library and information issues, action alerts, contact information and links to members of Congress: [www.ala.org/takeaction](http://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 ALADNOW and then Subscribe.

#### Washington Newslines (ALAWON)

Online newsletter from the ALA Washington Office with timely updates and action alerts on federal legislation and policies regarding libraries and information issues. Free over the Internet. To subscribe, send the message: "subscribe ALA-wo" followed by your first and last name to [listproc@ala.org](mailto:listproc@ala.org).

### Promotional materials

#### 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 <http://alastore.ala.org>. 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 Public Information Office. Available online at [www.ala.org/issues&advocacy](http://www.ala.org/issues&advocacy).

#### A Library Advocate's Guide to Building Information Literate Communities, ALA Library Advocacy Now! Action Pack 2001.

Ideas and strategies, messages and sample publicity materials for advocating the importance of information literacy and the critical role of libraries and librarians. Available on the ALA Web site at [www.ala.org/issues&advocacy](http://www.ala.org/issues&advocacy).





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### **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](http://www.ala.org/issues&advocacy) (click on Tools and Publications).

### **Training**

#### **Library Advocacy Now! Training**

Workshops are 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 and for special audiences, e.g., trustees, Friends of Library. Contact the ALA Public Information Office.

### **Key contacts**

#### **ALA Public Information Office**

50 East Huron Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60611  
Telephone: 800-545-2433, ext. 5041/5044  
Fax: 312-944-8520  
E-mail: [pio@ala.org](mailto:pio@ala.org)  
[www.ala.org/pio](http://www.ala.org/pio)

#### **ALA Washington Office**

1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 403  
Washington, D.C. 20004  
Telephone: 800-941-8478  
Fax: 202-628-8419  
E-mail: [alawash@alawash.org](mailto:alawash@alawash.org)  
[www.ala.org/washoff](http://www.ala.org/washoff)

#### **Association for Library Trustees and Advocates**

American Library Association  
50 East Huron Street  
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Fax: 312 280-3257  
E-mail: [alta@ala.org](mailto:alta@ala.org)  
[www.ala.org/alta](http://www.ala.org/alta)



# Notes

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