

EVERYDAY ADVOCACY - NYLA 2017

1 | What is Everyday Advocacy?

Advocacy: By definition, advocacy is simply fostering public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy. Another way to look at it? The glue that holds libraries together publicly.

Everyday Advocacy: The understanding that advocacy is everyone's job, everyday. The biggest misconception about advocacy is that only leaders, or bosses, should advocate on behalf of libraries. This is simply not true! Anyone who recognizes the value that a strong library brings to their community can, and should, advocate on a daily basis through simple conversations, highlighting services, and providing excellent service. Ultimately, advocating for libraries means advocating for communities.

2 | Key Talking Points

- ★ Libraries **matter** - have your own version of "WHY" ready to share in 1-2 sentences
- ★ Libraries are **more** than books - have your own version of "WHAT" they are ready to share
- ★ Libraries **build** stronger communities - share an example of "HOW" they contribute to this
- ★ Libraries are at **community tables** - share "WHERE" they are beyond the physical library

3 | Top Advocacy Tips

- ★ **Understand public perceptions of libraries:** One of the real challenges that libraries face is that community members often have a preconceived (and possibly inaccurate) understanding of what libraries are and what they do. One stereotype is that libraries are merely places that offer books, DVDs, newspapers, and scholarly articles, rather than as collectively coordinated service organizations meant to support the entire community. Understanding how libraries are perceived will only increase your ability to make connections to the community.
- ★ **Know your own strengths (and weaknesses):** Library advocacy requires leadership, but the role that you play could take a variety of forms, as leadership does not always involve taking charge. Knowing more about your own strengths and weaknesses as a leader and contributor will help you to better serve yourself, your library, and your community as an advocate.
- ★ **Turn Outward:** Instead of thinking of library advocacy as something that we do for libraries, think of it as using our positions as libraries to advocate *for communities*.
- ★ **Align with Community Aspirations:** Libraries stay relevant by prioritizing the needs, concerns, and aspirations of the communities that they serve, this is true for all libraries. Think about ways your library could better understand community aspirations and then develop services

and resources to help community members reach those aspirations. Organizing community conversations is one way to grow deeper connections with the communities that we serve.

- ★ **Priorities:** As we all know, libraries have limited resources, such as funding, staff time, and energy. We must constantly make choices about how to best transform these resources into real impacts. What are the three most important issues or concerns facing your community that your library could help address?
- ★ **Build an Advocacy Network:** Identifying and reaching out to collaborators, partners, and allies will dramatically improve your ability to make a positive impact upon your community through library advocacy. It truly does take a community effort to bring about needed change, so cast your net widely when looking for building your advocacy network—from within your own library or library system, to other libraries, to professional organizations such as the NYLA and ALA, to library users and other members of your community, to community business and civic leaders, and even to public officials.
- ★ **Tell Your Story:** Learning how to make a compelling case for your library and your community is an important piece of advocacy. Think about the different ways that you could tell your story and how you might weave in anecdotes, case studies, statistics, infographics, and community evidence into a compelling narrative in order to clearly communicate how your library is trying to make a measureable impact upon the community.
- ★ **Get Your Message Out:** How you communicate your message will also depend upon your audience and how you're reaching them. Depending on whether you're trying to meet with people face-to-face meetings, email messaging, traditional media such as newspaper op-eds, social media, mailings, events, or any variety of communication tools, you'll need to tailor your message appropriately in order to have the largest impact.
- ★ **Reach Your Representatives and Elected Official:** Libraries could not continue doing what we do without funding, so reaching out to community and government leaders is an important part of library advocacy—perhaps now more than ever, considering the challenging budgetary decisions now facing towns, cities, school districts, colleges, and universities. Budgetary decision-makers are increasingly (and rightly) demanding that public funds have a public impact, meaning that libraries must increasingly demonstrate real impacts upon the communities that we serve.

4 | Create Your Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is a short and quick introduction to the question: “What do you do and why do you do it?” Using this concept, you can develop multiple elevator speeches based on a wide variety of scenarios such as, talking to a board member, a neighbor, a business owner in the community, etc...

Here is a great infographic from ALSC to help you create your own personalized elevator speech:

<http://bit.ly/ALAElevatorSpeech>

5 | Additional Resources

Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)

<http://www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy/>

Looking for quick and easy ways that you can make a difference? Get inspired by these comprehensive resources that will help you be informed, speak out, and engage with your community in order to improve the lives of children and their families.

American Association of School Librarians (AASL)

<http://www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/tools>

Are you a school librarian ready to become the next learning leader? Strong libraries build strong students, and the resources on this page will help you transform your students into lifelong learners. Learn how you and your library could help ensure that all students have the best chance to succeed.

Public Library Association (PLA)

<http://www.ala.org/pla/leadership/advocacy>

Public libraries have never played a more vital role in transforming communities, yet ensuring that public libraries have the funding to continue this mission has never been more challenging. With these resources, you can watch videos to discover how other libraries are advocating, learn how to strengthen community relationships, and better communicate your library's value to important stakeholders.

Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues>

No matter whether you support community college students, undergrads, grad students, faculty, or researchers, college and research libraries often find themselves at the forefront with issues and trends that affect society as a whole. Discover ways that you could help your library leverage its resources through evidence-based strategies to better prepare for the future.

United for Libraries

<http://www.ala.org/united/advocacy>

No matter which kind of library you work in, partnering with trustees, advocates, friends, and foundations works. Take the mystery out of library advocacy by watching a free webinar and reading the step-by-step Power Guide for Successful Library Advocacy.

August 2017 edition of Library Journal contains a "Be Heard: Advocacy in Action" feature package www.libraryjournal.com/BeHeardPoster