



ALBERTA LIBRARY

TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION

ADVOCACY

Talk about libraries and influence the political process.

Definition: Advocacy (BCLTA, 2012)

- Is a **central part** of the responsibilities of library trustees.
- Is about **ensuring** that libraries are valued, supported and connected to the community.
- Is about **informing** potential partners, decision makers, supporters, clients, and stakeholders.
- Is part **public relations** and **part lobbying**.
- Is **an ongoing process** to raise awareness.



What's the Big Idea?

- Provincial funding and municipal appropriation levels are not necessarily sufficient.
- It is the library board's responsibility to **cultivate a relationship with library users, influencers and decision makers**, providing all the necessary information and advocating for funding sources needed to deliver good library service.



Trustees are Well Positioned

- They **represent** the interests and understand the needs of their communities.
- They **exercise** the right to be heard and express their opinion about an issue.
- They **cultivate** connections with individuals who can help the library's cause.
- They have **intimate knowledge** on a full range of public library services.

STEPS FOR SUCCESS



#1 – Set an Objective

- Your board needs to **set a definite action plan** when updating your strategic plan.
- If it's more funding, how much more? What will you do with it?
- If it is legislative change, why? How many volunteers and support staff will you need?



#2 – Identify Your Target Groups

- **Differentiate** between users, non users, potential partners, influencers and the decision makers.
- **Decide as a board how many groups you're going to target** and plan to make weekly/monthly visits to as many groups as possible throughout the year.



Potential Targets

- Elected Officials
- Civil Servants
- Library Customers
- Church Groups
- Business Groups
- Service Groups
- Youth Groups
- Schools
- Sports Organizations
- Seniors Groups
- Craft / Hobby Groups
- Recreation Groups
- Horse Clubs
- Pre-School Moms



#3 – Decide What Your Message Is

- Determine what your targets need to know about the way that **libraries serve and impact the lives of their constituents and support communities** so that they can make informed decisions.
- There are many where we can show the value of public libraries to the community:
 - Literacy
 - Citizen Development and Participation,
 - Business Development,
 - Workforce Development,
 - Community Value Improvement
 - Lifelong Learning



#4 – Determine Communication Strategies

- In order to reach and influence as many people as you can, you should **develop as many strategies as you can** based on your capacity and people-power to carry them out.



FORMING COMMITTEES



Social Media Committee

- **YouTube Videos**
- **Email Blasts**
- **Pinterest Postings**
- **Web Announcements**
- **Twitter**
- **Facebook**



Personal Approach Committee

- **Engaging Titular Campaign Chair (VIP)**
- **Speakers Bureau**
- **Meeting with Newspaper's Editorial Board**
- **Petitions**
- **Phone Bank**
- **Personally Reaching Out to Friends, Relatives**



Traditional Print Committee

- **Flyers**
- **Yard signs**
- **Buttons**
- **Letters to the editor**
- **Postcards**



Breaking It Down

- Assuming you will be using the committee structure above, the following is an implementation design for each area.

Reed, S., Nawalinski, B., & Kalonick, J. (2013)



Social Media Committee



Website Development

- Great place **to provide information about your campaign**, put out your campaign message and slogan, and let visitors know exactly what they can do to help further your cause.
- Some libraries will be a direct city or county department and as such their **website is local government property**. It may be that campaigning for the library will not be possible on the library's website.
- Friends **have full leeway to educate visitors about the campaign and even to ask them to vote yes**. If the Friends' site is part of the library's site, now might be the time to either move it into a separate space or create a separate campaign-only website.

Email Blasts

- Emails sent to decision makers **must be plentiful and they must remain on message**. Create a template for supporters, allowing them to enter their own comments, and have the email automatically sent to decision makers.
- If you are working to generate votes then you will want to **craft a single message to voters** telling them what the library is asking for and why it is so important.



E-Petitions

- These drives can be effective **only if you are able to get a significant number of supporters to sign on**. You want to ensure the petition drive goes viral and then ends up with the budget decision maker(s).
- Signed e-petition should arrive in their inboxes **at least 2-3 weeks prior to their initial work on the budget**. If this is a grassroots campaign to influence the vote, the e-petitions can be posted on Facebook, and the campaign's website.

YouTube Videos

- A couple of YouTube videos highlighting the library and its quest for a better budget or a new bond issue can be **a great tool for widely distributing your message.**
- Videos can be created with a special camera and perhaps a tripod for the “talking head” portion. Once the tapes are uploaded, your team will want **to use every avenue of marketing.** to ensure that they are watched.

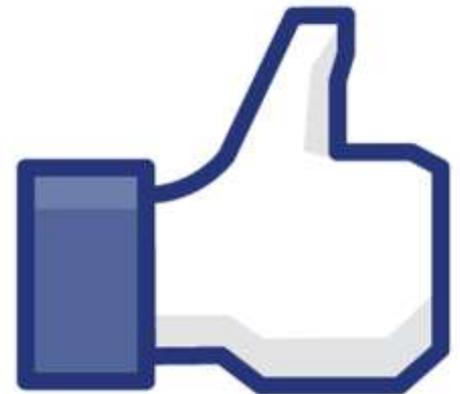
Pinterest

- Pinterest is a social media network that gives people a place to post their pictures, favourite recipes, or anything they find interesting and think others will, too.
- This network will allow you to pin visual items from your campaign such as your slogan, buttons, flyers, or even quotes about the importance of libraries – and yours in particular.



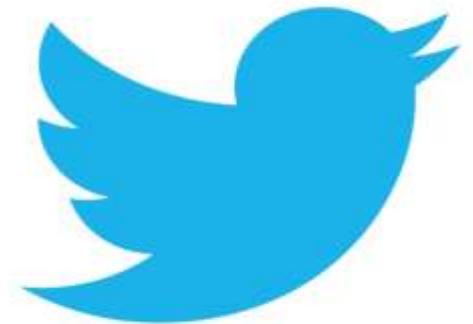
Facebook

- If the library or Friends group doesn't already have a Facebook page, now is the time to create one – and it doesn't have to cost you anything but time.
- Once set up, you can invite as many people as possible to “like” your page and the task force working on this can ensure that information stays frequent and up-to-date. Every time you post something on Facebook, the post will automatically go to your Facebook fans!



Twitter

- Using Twitter will give your campaign a chance to **repeatedly tweet about your campaign's progress**, any new quotes from sources such as president of the trustees or newspaper editor, and information about what supporters can do to help.



Personal Approach Committee



Each One, Reach 10

- Every single person who volunteers to help with your campaign should be given **a copy of your campaign's slogan, the main message of your campaign, and the campaign's talking points.**
- Each volunteer should be asked to **reach out to at least 10 or more family members or friends** letting them know about the campaign, asking for their support (be specific), and asking for their contact information – especially email.



Phone Bank

- If you choose this strategy, you will have to secure phone lists and **develop a script for volunteers**.
- The phone script should be **based on the goal and the talking points**, and should be friendly and very short.
- Be sure that telephone volunteers have **reporting sheets that include the recipient's phone number and what they are willing to do**. These sheets should go back to the committee chair who will ensure that there is follow through regarding the supporters' willingness to engage.



Meeting with Editorial Board

- The people who request an appointment with the editorial board **should also be comfortable asking for the newspapers support of your efforts.**
- Remind them that you have **the goal of literacy, lifelong learning** and an informed citizenry in common.
- Let them know that your campaign intends to **take ad space in the paper** promoting the library as one of the strategies if that is the case.

Speakers Bureau

- Each person willing to be on the speakers bureau should use the established talking points, be assigned an organization(s) with whom to speak, and be charged with setting up the engagement within the campaign's time frame.
- Good prospects for this bureau are active members of a friends group, trustees, library administrators, loyal patrons – including teachers, home-school parents, regular meeting room users, patrons who are also active in the groups/clubs you wish to address.



Petition Drive

- An old-fashioned petition drive can have great impact because it is tangible. If you get a large number of signatures, you will have a large batch of paper to deliver to the decision makers.
- The petition **statement should be kept simple** – something like “I support a 3% increase to the Anycity Public Library in 2014” will suffice.
- Once the statement is determined, hundreds of copies should be made with signature lines below the statement that includes the signer and their address.

Traditional Print Committee



Letters to the Editor

- You have **the power of the press** when you use your local newspaper to write letters to the editor. You will want to **sign up as many people as possible for this job**.
- All those asked to write letters to the editor should be given **a list of talking points** along with **the campaign message and slogan**.
- Be sure, as well, that your letter writers **reflect the ethnic, economic, and age diversity of your community**.



Flyers

- These are **easy and inexpensive ways to get your campaign's message out**. They can include the information about the campaign, what supporters can do to help, and why it is important.
- Once you have developed the flyers, be sure to **distribute them everywhere you can think of** like grocery store bulletin boards, doctors' offices, supportive businesses, civic organizations, and at the library itself if permitted.



Yard Signs

- Make your yard sign message **brief but comprehensive**.
- If you are looking for a “yes” vote – it can be **as easy as “VOTE YES for the LIBRARY on April 15!”**
- If you are limited in the number you are able to make and place, be sure that you **cover all geographic/demographic areas in your community**.

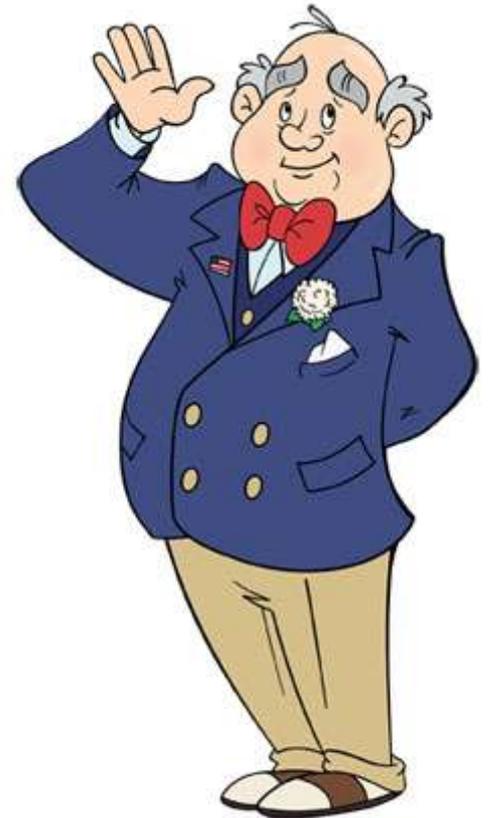
Postcards

- Another method to get the grassroots to connect with their decision makers but like e-petitions this **will only work if you get hundreds or thousands sent** – depending on the size of your community.
- Be sure to **know where you can hand out postcards without violating any ordinances**. Pre-stamp and pre-address the postcards, and have residents jot a quick message.

And in the End . . .

- Win or lose, it will be important for the leadership team to come together one more time to **document the highlights and low lights of the campaign.**
- What worked well? What didn't? What would you do differently next time? It will be **important to have this “post mortem” to give guidance and support for the next leadership team** – and again, win or lose – there is likely to be a next time.

Cultivating a Relationship With Elected Officials



The Research Tells Us . . .

- **Elected officials are very busy people and need to be kept informed** and up-to-date with accurate information about activities, involvement of citizens, and the impact of budget expenditures and utilized services.
- Help your elected officials to understand what your library does and for whom, how your library is spending their appropriations and the provincial allocations, and **how their regional system benefits their constituents.**

STEPS FOR SUCCESS



Formal Approach

- **#1** - The Board must first **examine how library services are aligned with the personal agendas of elected officials and community needs.**
- **#2** - Have the assigned Councillors and the Mayor convinced that investing time in the Library Board is **both beneficial to the council and a constructive use of time.**
- **#3** - Find a way to **have the entire Council visit the library.** A tour of the library plus an abbreviated presentation of your plan of service would assist Councillor's in understanding the board vision.
- **#3** - Plan an annual presentation to your council – **have all your statistics, past achievements, and updated plan of action at hand.** This should be a short 15 minute max power point presentation with a handout of facts

Go Above and Beyond

- Encourage your council members to visit your annual open house and bring greeting from the town.
- Have the mayor cut the ribbon to a new service (new computers, eBooks that you have bought for patron use, a new collection of books from your regional system).
- Have councillors read to youth during Family Literacy Month.
- Have your councillor/mayor kick off your summer reading program.
- Prepare a monthly activity newsletter to go in the council ‘communication’ agenda item; this can be a summary of the librarians report of activities undertaken during the month, new services, upcoming activities planned for the library.
- Give council a scrapbook of print media, and find other ways of keeping them informed on a weekly or monthly basis.

Conclusion

- Elected Officials make decisions based on **public input and people that put pressure on them for action and decisions.**
- They vote based on what their constituents feel is valuable. Therefore it is in the libraries best interests to **inform and advocate to a plethora of community groups**, get their support, and get them to advocate to the politicians in favor of the library.

- **Libraries need to emphasize on advocacy to the masses! – In as many ways possible throughout the year.**

think

big

“To every person there comes that special moment when he is tapped on the shoulder to do a very special thing unique to him. What a tragedy if that moment finds him unprepared for the work that would be his finest hour.”

- Winston Churchill



Resources

- BCLTA. *Advocacy*. Retrieved from <http://www.bclta.ca/advocacy>
- Public Library Services Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs. (2012). *Library board basics: a handbook for library trustees and managers*.
- Reed, S., Nawalinski, B., & Kalonick, J. (2013). *Citizens save libraries: a power guide for successful advocacy*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/united/powerguide>
- Rendell, E.G., Zahorchak, G., Zales, C.M., & Cole, B.W. (2005). *Cultivating Pennsylvania's growing libraries: training resource kit for public library trustees*. Retrieved from <http://www.portal.state.pa.us>