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# The Advocacy Action Plan Workbook

ALA Advocacy Institute

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# Preface

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We are pleased to present this action-planning guide, developed in collaboration with the ALA Advocacy Training Subcommittee of the ALA Committee on Library Advocacy.

Grassroots advocacy is the key to the success of our libraries. In an increasingly complex world, with strong competition for funding, the library community must stand up and speak out for America's libraries.

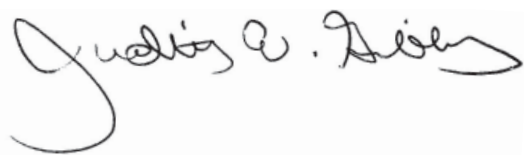
Our voices can be made stronger if we stand up and speak out in a unified voice. Critical to the Advocacy Institute is the idea that library staff, trustees and Friends must work together to make our voices heard. Once we convince community leaders and to citizens at large about the importance and necessity of libraries, they can begin to speak out for libraries at the state and national levels.

Therefore, thank you for your interest in library advocacy. Together, we can do it. ¡Si, si puede!

Sincerely yours,



Carol A. Brey-Casiano  
Chair, Committee on Library Advocacy  
2004–2005 ALA President



Judith Gibbons  
Chair, Advocacy Training Subcommittee

# **The Advocacy Action Plan Workbook**

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Permission is granted to libraries, other groups and individuals to reproduce this toolkit for nonprofit use.

Much of the content and concept for this workbook comes from *Making Our Voices Heard: Citizens Speak Out for Libraries* published by Friends of Libraries U.S.A., 2004. For more information on this publication, please call 1-800-936-5872.

The Advocacy Institute project was the recipient of the 2004 World Book Goal Award. The Regional Advocacy Institute project is made possible by a grant from the Ford Foundation. To learn more, visit [www.ala.org/advocacyinstitute](http://www.ala.org/advocacyinstitute).

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## **Before You Begin**

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This guide is designed to help you create an action plan for library advocacy. It will help you focus on what you need to do, how you intend to get it done, and how to ensure that the timing is maximized for the best results. The types of activities and task forces listed below are only suggestions. Depending on the type of campaign you design and what you believe will work best in your community, you might create other types of task forces with other types of activities.

Do not worry that you'll need more volunteers than you think you can get. First of all, the Coordinating Committee will include those already involved—the library administration, the library trustees, and the Friends' executive committee. The task forces will require recruitment but not all the task forces need a lot of volunteers. In some cases just two or three "worker bees" will be plenty. On the other hand, the more people you engage to be active in this campaign, the better your chances of success!

If you are presenting this program to a group, plan for a half-day or longer meeting to accommodate the full presentation and discussion. Consider reviewing each file in advance to estimate the time needed to present to your Friends group.





## Section 2: Strategies for Developing Your Message

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**ACTION STEP #3: Name your key audience.**

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2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Determine who your audience is.**

- A. What groups or individuals are currently most supportive of your library? What key decision-makers would you like to have on your side? What other groups would you like to reach with your message?
- B. Why are your issues this important to them?
- C. List three supporting points:

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## 2. Determine your key messages.

What is the most important thing you want others to know? That is your key message, one that you will repeat over and over again. This message should be something you can say in conversation, in interviews or presentations to groups. It should be easy to say and remember—no more than 15 words. It may be simple as:

*“Millions of people pass through the library each year, but without adequate support, these resources may not be there when you need them.”*

Or, *“There is no such thing as good education without good libraries.”*

Your key message should be used consistently in news releases, letters-to-the editor and other communications. It may also be distilled into a pithy campaign slogan.

In developing your message, think first about your audience. What do you want them to think? Feel? Do? Feelings are what motivate people to act. That feeling may be compassion, concern, anger or joy. One of your goals in delivering your message should be to spark a feeling, whether it’s pride, frustration or outrage.

### **ACTION STEP #4: What are your key messages?**

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### **3. Develop your talking points.**

What stories or examples support your key message? You will need at least three talking points, stories or examples that support your key message. Using descriptive, local examples is an effective way to get the attention of decision-makers. These may change based on the needs and interests of your audience. Examples include the following:

*“A 2002 ALA study confirmed that when the economy is down, library use is up. Unfortunately, at the same time, tight city and state budgets are closing library doors and reducing access when it’s needed most.”*

*“Libraries and librarians provide free and equal access to information for people of all ages and backgrounds—in schools, on college and university campuses and in communities large and small.”*

*“Libraries return substantially more benefits to its users for each \$1 of annual local taxes.”*

### **Tips for Telling an Effective Story\***

Effective stories:

- ✓ are simple, brief and personal;
- ✓ have a beginning, middle and end;
- ✓ have a “punch line”;
- ✓ do not use real names unless you have been given permission;
- ✓ have a message;
- ✓ are appropriate;
- ✓ are specific;
- ✓ are personal;
- ✓ show the library/librarian clearly solving a problem or filling a need; and
- ✓ illustrate to a potential funder what giving you the funds will mean in real-life terms.

\*Tips for Telling an Effective Story used courtesy of Patricia Glass Schuman.

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### **Bridge, Hook and Flag**

These are three techniques for controlling the conversation or interview so that you are sure to get the main point or points that you want remembered across to your legislator or legislative staff member.

**Bridge.** This technique will allow you to move from an area in the conversation that you don't want to discuss or that has the potential to sidetrack the issue, and get the conversation back to your message. If the legislator says, for example, "Why shouldn't we be supporting policy that will help software companies? Isn't a good economy good for libraries?" Rather than getting into a discussion about the economy and whether or not new legislation will help the economy overall, you can use this as a platform for your point by saying: "I think the real question is . . ." and go back to your main point. For example, "I think the real question is "doesn't everyone benefit from good consumer laws?" Then, answer that question!

**Hook.** This is a technique that can lead your listener to follow-up on your first point allowing you to get a second point in. For example, you can say, "There are two very important considerations that must be taken into account before you support this proposed policy. The first is . . ." then expand on that point. It is likely that the legislator or staff person will then ask you (or allow you) to follow up with the second point. This keeps the conversational ball in your court longer and gives you the opportunity to make both (or all points)

**Flag.** This technique is the easiest and most people use it unconsciously all the time. Flagging alerts your listeners to what you consider most important. It's a good way to emphasize the key point or points you want the audience to remember. Flagging is simply giving your audience a verbal clue about what is important: "The most important thing to remember is . . ." or "If you remember nothing else, please remember these two points . . ."

## Section 3: Strategies to Get the Message Out

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There are a wide variety of avenues to use in getting your message out, including the following:

**Library Newsletter:** Your newsletter gives you the “power of the press.” Once you have come up with a message or slogan that is powerful for the library, use it often and remember to explain what’s behind the message.

**Web site:** Be sure to have a list of ways that supporters can help present on the very front page of your site. These can include:

- Volunteer to help with the campaign (and give them a number to call).
- Write a letter to the editor (give the newspaper’s address along with “talking points” to help them make the case.
- Vote yes for our library and ask all your neighbors and friends to do the same.
- Call your council members and let them know you support the Friends of the Library campaign. Be sure to list council members' phone numbers and/or addresses.

**General Promotion Materials:** Book marks, book bags, program flyers, membership renewals, direct mailings for membership drives—all of these materials are opportunities to get your message out. Try these other avenues as well:

- Leave pro-library bookmarks at doctors’ offices and other places where people go and wait.
- Ask the local grocery store to put your message on their bags for a given length of time.
- Ask your utility company if you can include a bookmark (with your message and information about the library) in a citywide mailing.
- Send a selected list of new business resources at the library to members of the Chamber of Commerce and be sure to include how the library benefits all business in your city.

**Letters to the Editor:** Everyone reads letters to the editor! So why not be sure that a pro-library letter slips in every now and then? A good way to “hook” library promotion into a letter to the editor is to respond to a big issue that the press is covering showing how libraries can make a difference.

**Op-Ed pieces:** It can be harder to get your local paper to print an op-ed piece. Here is what will help you get some excellent press coverage via this more in-depth citizen editorial:

- Have a well known citizen write it.
- Tie into a major issue facing the city and show how the library helps (see “Letters to the Editor” above).

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- Call the editor and talk to him or her about writing an op-ed piece and find out what topic is likely to be printed and how you can increase your chances.

**Radio:** Develop radio spots for airing on local channels. Visit your local radio station and ask them if they would create some Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for the library as a contribution. If not, ask if they would do so at a discounted price.

Visit with the radio station and tell them about what the library has to offer and why it matters to everyone in the community. Ask the station to develop three or four spots using your message or slogan as a tag line. Finally, be sure the station is willing to air the spots.

**Television coverage:** Getting coverage of library events is very difficult unless the event is highly unusual. The key is to try to hook the station into covering something that will have significant visual appeal and/or special interest appeal. Talk to the station manager about what kinds of community programs are most likely to get some air time.

Another television avenue—and one that is easier—is to get time on a local noon show or on public access television. This will give you an opportunity to really get your message across whereas coverage of an event is likely to last no more than 10 seconds. Call the station manager to see about being a guest on a local show.

**Presentations:** Nothing is more effective than personal contact. That's the upside. The downside is that you can't reach as many people at once with your message. You'll need to create and train an entire cadre of Friends and volunteers to get the message out in person.

Civic organizations such as the Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, etc. always welcome guest speakers. Many of your Friends will belong to their own clubs and organizations as well. Make a list of all the opportunities there are in your community to get some "face time" and begin scheduling speaking engagements to get your message out.

Remember to "know your audience." Make sure when you talk about the importance of the library and its services, you are tailoring your comments to what is of interest to your audience. If you are talking to physicians, for example, talk about the link between health and literacy and all that the library does to support literacy—beginning at birth. If you are talking to the gardening club, talk about the importance of lovely, well maintained libraries as an important part of civic beauty.

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Consider the following when deciding which strategies to use:

**WHO** is your 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?

## Strategies Checklist

How will you deliver your message? What public relations tools (brochures, fact sheets, etc.) will you need to help build your case?

### **ACTION STEP #5: Strategies**

Postcard Campaigns

Work with radio station to develop Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Develop ad(s) for local paper and determine best time to run the ad(s)

Mobilize a “Letter to the Editor Campaign”

Find local television and radio stations that will interview campaign volunteers on talk shows

Write an op-ed piece

Other ways (List here) \_\_\_\_\_

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Other ways (List here) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Section 4: Team Building

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### **ACTION STEP #6: Name Your Network**

Library Friends

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Faculty Members

Community or Campus Leaders

Trustees

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Library Staff

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Other

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**ACTION STEP #7: Staying Connected**

Write down three things you'll do when you get home to strengthen relationships with the members of your network named above.

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## **Tactics for Success: Creating a Coordinating Committee**

The purpose of the Coordinating Committee is to ensure that your advocacy efforts become a reality. The Coordinating Committee can keep track of the many facets of your project, assign deadlines to specific tasks, or delegate specific tasks to others. This group can create an overarching timeline for your entire project and help ensure that your deadlines are met. When creating a Coordinating Committee, think about these questions:

- Who will serve as Chair?
- Who might serve on the committee?
- Who will contact and recruit members?
- When should the committee begin meeting?

In projects large in scope or long-term, you may want to create task forces or subcommittees to help complete specific tasks. If this is the case, ask yourself these questions in planning your subcommittees:

- Will you need other task forces to help achieve your goal?
- How many volunteers per task force are necessary?
- Who might be recruited?
- When should their work begin and be completed?

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## Types of Task Forces

There are many types of task forces, covering specific projects. Some of these are listed here:

**Oversight Task Force:** Essentially, the Coordinating Committee becomes the Oversight Task Force to keep the campaign going smoothly. This task force develops talking points for the campaign (with the help of library administration), sets up task forces, and calls regular meetings of the task force chairs to ensure steady progress.

**Publications and Design Task Force:** Creates a design for the campaign so all materials developed will have a consistent look and be readily identified with your campaign. The task force will also develop the materials you'll need for distribution and will coordinate distribution. *For downloadable artwork, visit [www.ala.org/@yourlibrary](http://www.ala.org/@yourlibrary)*

**Media Task Force:** will use local media to get the word out about the campaign. To ensure a consistent message, use the talking points already developed. When developing print advertisements, use the same "look" that the Publications and Design Task Force is using. *For more information see ALA Communications Handbook, [www.ala.org/ala/pio/availablepiomat/online\\_comm\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.ala.org/ala/pio/availablepiomat/online_comm_handbook.pdf)*

**Presentations Task Force:** will determine the various venues in your town/city that will give campaign volunteers an opportunity to share information about the campaign. This task force will also recruit and schedule a group of volunteers who are willing to go out and speak to identified civic organizations while using the talking points developed by the Media Task Force.

**Finance Task Force:** works with the Oversight Task Force and other task force chairs to determine what kind of funding will be needed to accomplish the campaign goals and to identify possible funding resources. Keeps track of the campaign budget.

**Evaluation Task Force:** works with the Oversight Task Force to monitor the campaign as it moves along and makes recommendations for modifications. This task force will also ensure that acknowledgements are sent out to volunteers, including those who provide professional services, financing or in-kind support. This group will schedule the final meeting following the outcome of the campaign to celebrate or to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign, especially if the campaign needs to be continued for another year.

## Section 5: Putting It All Together

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**What are your goals?**

**Who is your audience?**

**What are your key messages?**

**Who comprises your team?**

**What committees and task forces will have to be created?**

**What strategies will you implement?**

**1. Create a timeline:**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Volunteers Involved</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>

## Section 6: Checklist for Library Advocates

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

### ✓ **Talk, talk, talk!**

Look around you. There are people everywhere who could use their library, and who don't know about the valuable resources just waiting for them. At the grocery store, student union, the bank, PTA or staff meetings, the post office, in dorms, on a walk with your dog—talk to people and tell them why you love and value the library. Help them see what they could learn there, and how they can help bolster support for this cornerstone of their community, campus or school. It doesn't take much more than a friendly conversation for you to be a hero for your library!

### ✓ **Keep informed.**

Stay up to date on state and national activity. Visit the Advocacy Resource Center at [www.ala.org/issues&advocacy](http://www.ala.org/issues&advocacy) to view the latest resources, publications and information on library advocacy, as well as sign up for advocacy discussion lists. Contact your state association for information on important issues affecting your state. (You can link to your state chapter through the Advocacy Resource Center.)

### ✓ **Get to know your representatives (and their staffs).**

You've elected them; but how can you get them to help your cause? Get to know them—and their staffs—first. Visit your representatives' Web sites to learn their issues and priorities. Invite them to your libraries and let them see, firsthand, how valuable your library is to the community and to academic excellence. Let them know you want them to support all types of libraries, and library-friendly policies and give them specific ways they can get involved. You can schedule an appointment by calling your legislator's office, or even better, invite your representatives to visit the library for a special event you've planned. Let them see how their constituents are using the valuable services provided by the library, and you'll gain an important ally.

### ✓ **Work on your library's print or online newsletter.**

Many libraries now have a regular newsletter for patrons, students and faculty. Volunteer to write an advocacy column for the newsletter, highlighting ways that patrons and advocates can help the library, whether that is through a letter-writing campaign, volunteering at events, calling their legislators, or other means. Collecting all the valuable information in one place helps interested parties pick and choose among the many ways to help.

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✓ **Make—and/or distribute—handouts.**

Important information about the library, its services, and needs can be distributed in writing, for people to read later or pass on to others. If you have desktop publishing skills, or know someone who does, work to build written materials that can be passed along to others. These can include the library's hours and services, a "wish list" of things the library needs, information about an upcoming event, or any other pertinent library information. These ideas should be posted on your library's bulletin board for all to see. ALA provides a wealth of materials to help you get started through @ your library®, the Campaign for America's Libraries. Visit [www.ala.org/@yourlibrary](http://www.ala.org/@yourlibrary) and click on PR Tools & Resources.

✓ **Plan a library event.**

Any event during the year is an opportunity to showcase your library. Create an event or promotion that will get your Friends, trustees or other volunteers involved. You can host the event at the library or a local mall, county fair, park, or any campus venue and invite the media to attend. Visit [www.ala.org/pio](http://www.ala.org/pio) and click on "initiatives" for information on initiatives celebrated nationwide, including Banned Books Week, Library Card Sign-up Month and National Library Week. Always invite elected officials to your events!

✓ **You have your own built-in army of advocates. Use it!**

Many who work in libraries forget that they have a built-in army: the library staff. From library director to custodian, no one knows—and appreciates—the inner workings of your library like they do. Teach them the basics on library advocacy—share the resources ALA has to offer and keep them abreast of current events.

✓ **Lobby.**

Attend state library legislative days—and the ALA National Legislative Day, if possible. Bring Friends, trustees and other supporters. To learn about federal issues, visit the ALA Advocacy Resource Center at [www.ala.org/issues&advocacy](http://www.ala.org/issues&advocacy). Click on "Take Action" to contact your legislator. To learn about state issues, visit the Web site of your state library association.

✓ **Offer Internet tours.**

For those without a computer at home, the library is the number one point of Internet access. Your library can be the window to the Internet for many people in your community. Offer to show patrons how to use it, and walk them through your library's Internet policies. You can even invite local politicians and community leaders to a community-wide Internet orientation event, and show them how the library offers everyone equal access to technology.

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✓ **Get press.**

Speaking publicly about the specific value in your library. Are you good at public speaking? Call your local or campus radio talk show or TV news show. Like to write? Write a letter to the editor or an op/ed piece for your local paper, or ask students and faculty to write editorials for the campus paper. However you get in touch with the local or campus press, make sure you've developed your key messages and anticipated tough questions ahead of time, and be ready with statistics and information you can rattle off on the spot. To build your skills visit: [www.ala.org/issues&advocacy](http://www.ala.org/issues&advocacy) and click on "Tools & Publications."

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

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

✓ **Build your network.**

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

✓ **Add your idea here.**

They say that necessity is the mother of invention. As you move forward in your advocacy endeavors, please let ALA know about your successes and new ideas. Send an e-mail to [advocacy@ala.org](mailto:advocacy@ala.org) to share your experiences or tips. Your input—fresh ideas and energy—will keep library advocacy moving forward!

## Notes

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