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Building voter support for libraries

You Are the Candidate

Maximizing your library's visibility
in the community

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Advocacy Challenge

The existing library advocacy ecosystem is comprised of units of government with restrictions on public employees and use of public funds, and organizations organized as 501c3 charities with "caps" on their spending for elections and direct lobbying.

Answering that Challenge

EveryLibrary is up as a 501c4 Social Welfare Organization chartered to support local library ballot measures like bonds, referendum, parcel taxes, levies and mills.

Includes our support for legislation that impacts the ability of libraries to function as districts.

About EveryLibrary

EveryLibrary works with Info-Only and Vote YES campaigns

- Pre-planning and polling

- Technical assistance with campaigns

- Staff, Trustee and Friends roles

- Timing issues in the public trust

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Voter Information that Frames Our Discussions

"From Awareness to Funding" says…

Voter Attitudes

Nationwide, of all voters:

37% will Definitely vote yes for the library

37% will Probably vote yes for the library

26% will Probably or Definitely vote no or may vote either way.

Why Talk Politics and Libraries?

Your funders - elected officials - listen to voters.

When only 37% of likely voters say they will *definitely* support libraries at the ballot box it is necessary for you to become active.

Who Supports Libraries?

"From Awareness to Funding" says…

Library Use Does Not Matter

A voter's willingness to support increased library funding is not driven, or limited, by library use.

- OCLC "From Awareness to Funding" p. 7-2

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Library as Transformative Force

[T]he library is not perceived as just a provider of practical answers and information; the most committed supporters hold the belief that the library is a transformational force.

- OCLC "From Awareness to Funding" p. 7-4

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Attitude - Not Demographics

The factors that determine residents' willingness to increase their taxes to support their local library are their perceptions and attitudes about **the library** and **the librarian**.

- OCLC "From Awareness to Funding" p. 7-3

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Attitude - Not Demographics

They recognize the value of a 'passionate librarian' as a true advocate for lifelong learning.

What Activates Voters?

Seven Factors:

- A Reason to Vote

- Mobilized

- Personal Contact with Candidate or Issue*

- Culture/Tradition/Habit of Voting*

- Trust in Government

- Decided to Vote

- Weather/Access to Polls

What Activates Advocates?

1. An Identified Need

2. Personal Motivation

3. Experience of the Issue*

4. Prior Success as an Advocate*

5. Institutional Reputation

6. Made a Pledge

7. Ease of Access to Advocacy Tools

Activate in Either Context

VOTERS:

1. A Reason to Vote
2. Mobilization
3. *Personal Contact with Candidate**
4. *Culture/Tradition/Habit of Voting**
5. Trust in Government (pro or con)
6. Decided to Vote
7. Weather/Access to Polls

ADVOCATES:

1. An Identified Need
2. Personal Motivation
3. *Experience of the Issue**
4. *Prior Success as Advocate**
5. Institutional Reputation
6. Made a Pledge
7. Ease of Access to Tools

What Activates People for the Library?

#1 - Nothing Impacts Behavior More than their Perception of the Librarian and the Library as Institution.

#2 - Awareness that there is a Measure on the ballot or a Budget Issue at stake

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What Activates Voters for the Library?

The Librarian is the "Candidate"

The Library is the "Incumbent"

Library = Librarians + Community

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Why Libraries Lose

- The day of the vote is the first time enough people see the budget

- Zero-Sum Games

- Any tax is a bad tax

- Issues with Access

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Our Next Big Question?

How do we extend our influence to:

Town/City/County Budgets

State Legislators

Federal Funding and Regulatory

Funders and Grantmakers

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Run it Like a Campaign

What do you want to win?

Three Kinds of Money

1. Tax Money

2. Grant Money

3. Charitable Money

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Three Kinds of Money

1. Tax Money

   a. "Regular Order"

   b. At the Polls

2. Grant Money

   a. Capacity Building

   b. Sustaining

3. Charitable Money

   a. Small donors

   b. Big donors

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You Are Still the Candidate

Build your campaign team

Allies and Endorsers

Early contact is the difference

Inventory Your Allies

1. Educational Partners

2. Social Welfare and Religious Partners

3. Governmental Partners

4. Civic Partners

5. Business Partners

6. Politicians

7. Media

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Civic Attitudes

94% of Parents say libraries are important for their children. 79% say "very important". [2]

58% of Americans have a library card. [3]

62% of card holders have visited the library in the last year at least once.[4]

2. Pew, May 2013

3 and 4. Harris Interactive | ALA, January 2011

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Ask for Endorsements

- Your allies…
  - Become your endorsers
  - Become your funders
  - Become your volunteers
- The person who asks is the individual "closest to" the potential endorser.
- Ask early. Ask often.
- Plan to Publicize

Messaging that Works

The Library as….

Remember – "User Status" Does Not Matter

To Library Users:

- "As you know..."
- Personal Value Proposition
- Value for Other
- Activation for the library

To Non-Users:

- "As you can imagine…"
- Value to/for "the other"
- Satisfaction/Activation

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Data v. Stories

Data is a "Good Economy" Ask

Stories are a "Bad Economy" Ask

Perception Drives the Answer in Either Case

Voter See the Library as a "Transformative Force"

The Library as…

- Educational Partner

- Economic Development Engine

- Social Leveler

- Place of Discovery

- Personal Refuge

"Transformative Force"

The Library as Incubator

- Businesses
- The Arts
- Community Identity

The Library as Leverage

- Retail Anchor
- Grants and Capacity
- Access to Tech

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Budget Message Frames

We have a plan that...

- Is basic - needs stability
- Is aspirational - needs growth
- Is integral - advances several missions

The community needs the library to….

- Partner
- Incubators
- Leverage

"Perception of the Librarian"

Nothing Impacts Voter Behavior More than Their Perception of the Librarian and the Library as Institution.

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"The Passionate Librarian"

I am the Librarian who….

   … find a job

   … learn to read

   … connect with family

"The Passionate Librarian"

Your own story, your own biography, about why you work in the library matters.

What is your best story about helping an individual or the community 'change'?

"Let me tell you about our librarians…."

How You Can GOT(advocates)

Walking*

Phoning*

Personal contact with the candidate
or their representative

Events

Social

Activates volunteers and identifies core supporters

Signs

"Tribal" identity

Mailers

Least effective

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What You Can Do Starting Tomorrow

Days | Weeks | Months | Years

Inventory Your Ecosystem

1. Who else is on the ballot / before the body?

2. Who is your champion on the council?

3. Who is your opposition…?

4. What do they want?

5. What are your potential asks?

6. If you are not 'at risk' this season, who is?

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Community Engagement

Get the staff out of the library

- o Surveys
- o Programs and Events
- o Service Delivery

Improve customer service

- o Training and Role Playing
- o Ramp Up the Social Media
- o Start Spending on Advertising

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Techniques that Work

Get Out and Walk

Put Librarians in Unusual Spots

Volunteer Library Brigade

Mini Libraries

Show off your staff on social media

Library Card Signups "Outside" *

Your To Do List:

3 Days: Start spending on LIKES; Show off the staff on social media

3 Weeks: Do "Inventories"; Set that first new meeting and have two with old allies

3 Months: Walk a Precinct; Library Card Sign-ups

3 Years: Convene the "Library Coalition of THIS PLACE"

Thank You

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