

Create a storytelling culture!

- Spend time learning about the stories people associate with your library. Use this as a way to “break the ice” with visitors, guests at events, donors and community leaders. Consider telling stories about real people and situations rather than statistics. For example, tell a story about an elderly couple who use the library to surf the Internet, or a local small-business owner who worked with a reference librarian to research and develop a business plan.
- Library staff are great storytellers and should be involved in marketing and PR activities when appropriate.
- Maximize your library’s communication tools and resources by conveying consistent and repeated messages in news releases and press relations, on your website, in advertising, in direct mail and in print materials.

Effective Messaging

Develop key messages to communicate about your library. Some examples of messages that we have learned have the greatest resonance with audiences for libraries include:

- Libraries are a **democracy’s best-kept promise**. They provide “information for all.”
- **Libraries are unique in this information age.**
 - Information on nearly anything can be accessed in-person and also online.
- **Librarians are information experts who can quickly help patrons** zero-in on what they need.
- The library is an **access point for information** both as a building and as an online resource. The library is an important part of our information age **and serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas** delivered through a **diverse collection of speakers, exhibits and programs** that spark exploration and dialogue.
- Libraries are **community and cultural centers**.
- People love **books** and they want to know that their library invests in books. Talk about them.
- Libraries are a **source of lifelong learning**, social interaction and entertainment.
- **Libraries serve people** from early childhood through their senior years.
- Libraries are an important resource in early childhood development.
- Libraries support people through school, during their search for a job, through parenting, careers and retirement.

Grassroots Outreach

Library lovers are all around you. And you know them! Reach out. You'll be pleasantly surprised. Library lovers love to be needed!

- Seek the support of authors for readings, presentations and endorsements. Most authors have a library story to tell and tend to be very generous to libraries with their time and support.
- Many key influencers and business and community leaders have not used the library in a while. Invite them to come for a visit and demonstrate to them the library's impact on the community. Take advantage of their lack of knowledge to show them some of your services, such as research and reference assistance.
- Partnerships with cultural/ethnic communities and among communities with special interests can build strong marketing and outreach opportunities for programs and special collections.
- Partnerships with cultural groups, public broadcasting and arts organizations often garner strong new audiences, and can provide an excellent opportunity to share/trade mailing lists for fundraising and outreach efforts.
- Plan events related to special interests (such as rare books, book groups, summer reading, etc.). Such events can become media stories and opportunities for sponsor involvement. They can also help a library build its mailing list.

Media

The library is a hub for people. Reporters write stories about people. Help them make the connection between their need for human interest and hard news content, and your programs and services, as well as the resources you can provide to them.

- Consider writing an op-ed piece for your local news media positioning the library as an expert on important issues. Early childhood development, adult literacy, access to health information and meeting the needs of new communities are a few topics that are newsworthy and about which librarians can speak with authority.
- Position library staff as local experts for the media to interview (business reference, early childhood development and other specialized subjects).
- Consider pitching news on a quarterly basis to secure feature stories or community news coverage above and beyond regular calendar listings. Your chances for feature coverage increase if you pitch reporters stories that are about an impact the library is making on people's lives.
- Pitch stories to electronic media. A great deal of library media placement is in newspapers. Push to include outreach to radio and TV stations, being sure to reference strong audio and visual opportunities to increase placement.
- Build partnerships with the media and businesses. Newspapers, radio stations, television and outdoor media (billboards, bus shelters, etc.) can contribute valuable promotional space if they are

offered benefits as a partner. Similarly, local businesses can help promote the library in creative ways – for example with discounts and premiums for library cardholders.

Integrating Marketing and Fundraising

At the end of the day, all the work done in public relations, marketing and fundraising has one thing in common: all of it is about storytelling. Don't miss out on opportunities. Collaborate. Think in integrated ways. It saves you time and money and expands the reach of all your efforts.

- Timing is everything. Coordinate your fundraising communications and appeals with general library communications such as cardholder newsletters, program marketing, branch materials and Web content. This leverages resources and builds support and awareness for fundraising campaigns, while raising general awareness of your library.
- Media sponsorships are a good match for library funding campaigns. They help "sell" your project in the public phase of capital campaigns. Media partners can run ad campaigns coordinated with direct mail and Web-based fundraising.
- Fundraising campaigns are an opportunity to uncover library lovers and seek external advocates who can help make your library's core case for support. Profile business leaders, government officials, and community leaders as supporters and champions.
- Effective library program marketing also helps make the case to support fundraising. Use marketing of summer reading, an author series and other programs to also brand your library as a community resource.