



GUIDELINES FOR THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA (LIASA) ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

INTRODUCTION

This is an advocacy toolkit developed by Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA), to guide South African libraries. The toolkit enables library and information services staff to ensure that library and non-library clients know the value of the library and its services. It will help to ensure that actions are taken to encourage decision-makers to assist in implementing desired policy, or funding changes in support of libraries.

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is a strategic and deliberate process that brings about change in policies and practice. Advocacy is an ongoing process of building partnerships so that others will act for, and with you, turning passive support into educated action for library programs. It is the process of stakeholders making their voices heard on issues affecting their lives and the lives of others at local, provincial and national government level. This is about helping policy makers learn about, and find, specific solutions to persistent problems.

THE IMPORTANCE AND PURPOSE OF LIBRARY ADVOCACY

LIASA's advocacy toolkit is intended for current and potential library members, schools, colleges and universities, cities, research institutes and corporate and government structures and stakeholders, as well as the library community at large. It aims to create awareness of the fact that you, as a librarian, information specialist or library worker are making an enormous contribution towards providing free or fee-based access to information, knowledge and learning resources by:

- Ensuring that libraries are located in the midst of the developmental agenda
- Raising awareness and enhancing the visibility of libraries amongst local communities and their Stakeholders
- Being informed proactive and dynamic professionals
- Transforming and strengthening the profession
- becoming library advocates
- strengthening local and national campaigns through the establishment of networks and partnerships linked to the international arena

- working together to strengthen all our efforts by building credibility and sharing expertise; and
- engaging in actions to pressure decision-makers and monitor what Governments are doing.

WHY BE A LIBRARY ADVOCATE?

Library Advocates speak out for libraries because:

- Libraries have always had to justify their existence, they are not considered in comparison with other sectors
- Libraries are not a flashy issue in the political domain, expenditure is not high so they are not considered to be major players
- There is a change in the information seeking behaviour and needs of users and a visible shift in the library paradigm and there is a need for the constitutional upgrading of libraries and of the internet.
- The role of Librarians should be to support and promote the democratic rights of library workers in their endeavours to acquire, organised and disseminate information without interference
- There are drastic budget cuts, yet the demand for library services is increasing and capacity of libraries to offer meaningful services is undermined due to other competing interest for dwindling funds within governments departments.
- The available funds are inadequate unless library associations stand up, libraries will in future shut doors permanently leaving information professionals jobless

TERMS OF USE

The Advocacy Toolkit is applicable for all levels of the Librarians as a resource for building a structured approach for sustained advocacy and content, will also be valuable to anyone who wants to expand their understanding, approach to advocacy and how this approach is applied. The aim is to provide Librarians with ideas for creating their own advocacy initiative, based on the reality in the environment in which they operate. The Librarians provides an online space to exchange ideas and experiences around advocacy and can be used to ask questions and share stories, best practices, documents and experiences. Part of advocacy role is to be sure that you know what you do in the community, why it is important and what policy changes are necessary to help you further your goals.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENT LEGISLATORS

Your legislators have an important job to do every day they make decisions that impact everyone. Your job is to develop a positive working relationship with them and be an effective advocate for your library.

WHAT IS THE FIRST STEP TO GETTING TO KNOW THEM

When your legislator gets elected into office, send a letter of congratulations and invite them to your library for a Tour, Include your Legislators on your mail and e0mail list, Friend them on Facebook and Follw them on Twitter.

HOW DO YOU CONNECT WITH THEM

Make an appointment to meet with them in your office or their office, If you cannot get an appointmentwith your Legislator, ask to meet with a Staff person. Building a relationship with your legislator's staff is just as important as building a relationship with your legislator, as they rely heavily on their staff when they are making decisions.

WHEN I MEET WITH THEM, WHAT DO I SAY, WHAT DO I BRING?

Your first meeting will usually be a short one, you will be introducing yourself and your library and talking briefly about issues that are of importance to your library and its users. Bring things to the meeting that will showcase your library:

- Statistics about usage of your library.
- Newspaper or online media that details a recent library program or service.
- A testimonial from a satisfied patron.
- Your newsletter featuring upcoming events.
- An item with your library logo.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO STRENGTHEN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY LEGISLATORS?

- If your legislator recently passed a piece of legislation you can support, take the time to congratulate Him/ Her. The Official will appreciate your support.
- Make sure your Legislators know how they can get a Library Card
- Invite your elected officials to come for a tour of your Library, take their picture host it your library newsletter, library social media website and e-mail a copy to your official.
- Select a program that the Official could be involved in that is Poetry Reading, Handing out awards etc. invite the Press to cover the event, if the Press cannot make it send them a picture.
- You'll think of other ways to engage your legislators as you get to know them once they get to know you, they will start to think of you as their expert on library issues and will contact you from time to time to get your take on a specific issue.

Librarians play an important role in monitoring legislation, working with Legislators Staff to change bills, proposed legislative and engage in regulatory rulemakings. Without Librarians, input legislators and regulators have no idea if what they are proposing is helpful.

UPLIFTING THE IMAGE OF LIBRARIANS

Librarians are trained experts at the forefront of the Information Age. In a world that is information-rich, they are information-smart and help to create a society where everyone is literate as well as

“information literate”.All library staff have countless opportunities to build both public understanding and support, both within and outside their work environment. Library administrators are responsible for developing and coordinating an ongoing advocacy effort, one with well-defined roles for staff, government, library boards or councils, stakeholders and Friends of the Library. Librarians as advocates will raise the profile of libraries in order to secure funding opportunities and groundbreaking policy decisions.

WHO SHOULD BE A LIBRARY ADVOCATE?

Anybody who believes in the importance of libraries and access to information! This includes library boards or councils and Friends of the Library, library users (including children and their parents), educators, community leaders and librarians. Everyone who works in a library is a library advocate. Advocacy efforts must invest time in building relationships, because creating a constituency is the key to success. Relationships are a crucial way of adding strength to advocacy work, working with a wide range of partners to achieve advocacy results that includes private sector and corporate foundations, research institutes, universities, donors and the media. Links with such partners become even more crucial.

WHY DOES LIASA, AND WHY DO LIBRARIES, NEED FRONTLINE ADVOCATES?

LIASA’s advocacy theme is to improve the visibility of LIASA among all stakeholders, including relevant government departments and the media. The library provides important resources and services and, in return, the community or organization dedicates a portion of its resources to supporting the library’s contributions. The library’s health and vitality influences its community or organization in direct ways and, conversely, the community or organization’s vitality is reflected in its ability to support the library. Advocacy is a very large topic, encompassing aspects from a variety of different disciplines, and so there will undoubtedly be specific issues that this Toolkit does not cover. Future related work also includes identifying and outlining how different parts of the organization can effectively work together for advocacy

ALL library employees at **ALL** job levels must understand their essential role as advocates on behalf of their libraries. They must ultimately be able to deliver powerful messages stressing the value of libraries in order to gain community understanding and support. Their unique role on the frontline requires that they:

- Understand the importance of frontline advocacy
- Feel committed to disseminating their library’s message through the art of persuasion and influence; and
- Are willing to create and deliver messages using a variety of communication strategies.

YOU ARE YOUR LIBRARY’S BEST FRONTLINE ADVOCATE!

As a library staff member, you are the library’s best frontline advocate.

- **You** are the person who interacts with library customers as well as with your friends, neighbors, co-workers, family and others in your community or organization.

- **You** know your library best.
- Both you and your library exist within a larger community or organization.
- **You** know this community or organization best and understand the value of the library within it.
- **You** will be able to motivate library customers and others to support the library's initiatives and budget, and help decision-makers understand their library's interests.
- **You** will be able to establish a cadre of supporters who will advocate for the library in their own environments and organizations.

Let us all be frontline advocate for our libraries, advocacy for all libraries is not just the work of Directors and Administrators; it is everyone work and is more important than ever

HOW CAN YOU ADVOCATE FOR YOUR LIBRARY?

- Implement the LIASA Advocacy Training Programme.
- Engage with national research on how voters and elected officials perceive public libraries, and why they support them.
- Create your own library story for example as a librarian you interacts with library customers, you have the opportunity to spread your library's message to the community in a natural way. Once you try it you will be able to realize that advocating for your library is easier than you thought.
- Leaders can get involved by developing their own leadership skills, in order to be more confident advocates in their community.
- Build relationships and community networks to leverage your resources.
- Put your advocacy Work Plan into action.
- Educate the community about the needs of libraries and how the library can help in meeting their needs.
- Get to know your Stakeholders and representatives in government: invite them to your libraries and let them see how valuable your library is to communities and academic excellence.
- Be a hero of your library by doing the talk, tell on how you value and love libraries
- Build your network in order to make your message even stronger and add voices to the chorus of support

“Ensure your advocacy projects are client-centered”

“To do good work, one must first have good tools.” – Chinese proverb