

CHAPTER 9

IMPACT AND RELEVANCE

Demonstrating the impact and relevance of a library requires a proactive and strategic approach. Showing that the library makes a difference in your community and is an important institution needs to be clearly articulated and requires planning in advance.

Supporting your library means promoting it and explaining why it's important and worth your time. It's the job of every library trustee to be a library supporter. This goal is achieved by actively and enthusiastically seeking local, state, and federal resources for the library's staff, collections, facilities, and programs.

Trustees should share the library's story and value proposition using data with all stakeholders.

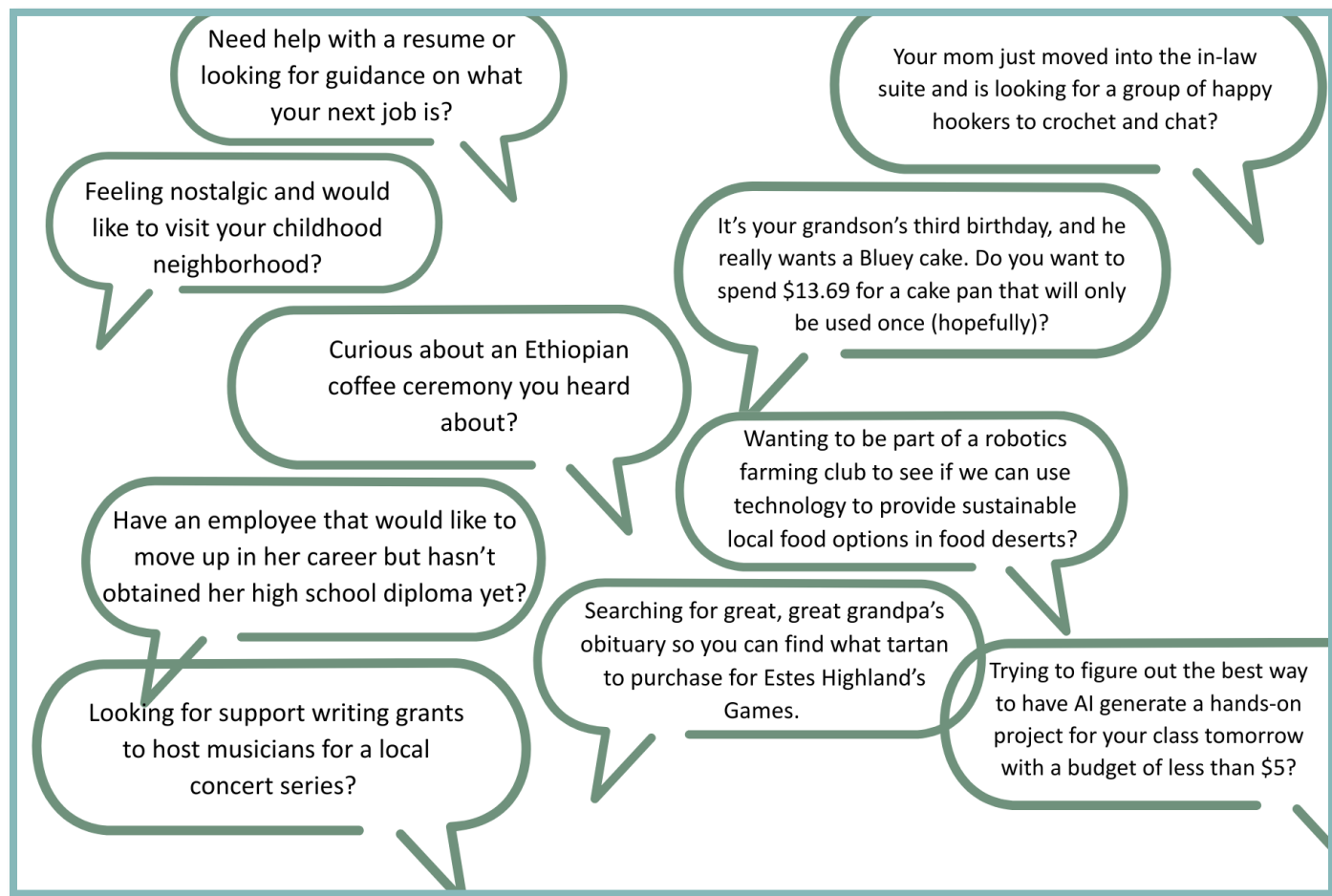
The following sections are intended for informational purposes and not intended as legal advice. Libraries and trustees should consult their own legal counsel for legal advice.

RELATED COLORADO PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS
MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

IN THIS SECTION WE WILL EXPLORE:

When in Doubt, Go to the Library.....	3
Local Engagement	4
Education, Advocacy, & Campaigning.....	5
State Legislative Network.....	9
Public Relations	11
Working With The Local News Media.....	14
Public and School Library Cooperation	15
Summary	15
Try This: The Power of your Library’s Story.....	16

WHEN IN DOUBT, GO TO THE LIBRARY



All these questions have one answer in common –the Library.

Wouldn't it be great if no matter what the question, the person always knew they could find the answer or get what they needed from their public library? Colorado public libraries are robust and dynamic centers committed to providing information, resources, and opportunities.

Rather than just library staff sharing what the library does, wouldn't it be great if the Town Manager, local DJ, or post office worker was connecting the public to your library? Your role as a trustee is to help make that happen to ensure the long-term viability of the library.

LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

When you see advocacy, don't panic. Advocacy is simply sharing the amazing and needed things your library does - creating local engagement. It can be as simple as sharing with your neighbors to testifying before Congress.

Advocacy at the local level is of paramount importance. As a trustee, you show your library's impact and relevance to decision makers by:

- Talking to friends about the library, its role in the community, and its needs
- Speaking to civic groups about the library's needs and issues
- Writing letters to the editor of the local newspaper
- Testifying at local and state budget hearings
- Talking and writing to state and federal legislators about the needs of the library
- Contributing to a library newsletter that is sent to decision makers

These kinds of advocacy are the responsibility of trustees. You are the voice of the community.

As trustees, you make a difference because you:

- See the library from the user's viewpoint
- Have a perspective on the full range of public services
- Represent a broad base of the community
- Understand the needs of the community
- Are volunteer participants in local government
- Are voters

Involve your local community in the advocacy process. Think of advocacy as inviting others to be part of the public library.

Trustees should be advocating for the library by pursuing contacts with friends, library users, civic groups, industry, business, real estate contacts, and elected town or city officials. Establish a local legislative network of committed residents and friends to put

library issues before the voters and officials. Identify key supporters, distribute facts, figures, and position papers, provide information on the legislative process, and mobilize and be ready for action. **There's no substitute for personal contacts.**

EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, & CAMPAIGNING

Colorado public employees are restricted from engaging in certain types of advocacy during work hours and while using public resources. As public officials, there are some limitations on what trustees can do in their role of advocate. This is true when the library is on the ballot.

Education, advocacy, and campaigning have different intentions. All library staff and trustees can educate on the impact and relevance of the library and its work. Advocacy includes educating the public and has an ask attached to it. Advocacy focuses on influencing decision-makers within institutions. Campaigning aims to build public support and pressure on decision-makers through public mobilization and awareness.

EDUCATE:

The public library has a lunch program that has brought more than 245 participants together to enjoy a meal out as well as connect and find new walking partners, Maj Jong players, and friendship.

ADVOCATE:

The public library has a lunch program that has brought more than 245 participants together to enjoy a meal out as well as connect and find new walking partners, Maj Jong players, and friendship. Help support this social connection by funding a transportation program offered by Colorado Seniors.

CAMPAIGN:

The public library has a lunch program that has brought more than 245 participants together to enjoy a meal out as well as connect and find new walking partners, Maj Jong players, and friendship. Help support this social connection by voting yes for funding a transportation program offered by Colorado Seniors.

COLORADO FAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICES ACT

The Fair Campaign Practices Act (FCPA) - [C.R.S. § 1-45-117](#) sets the parameters for election activities and political subdivisions (the library district or municipality). Specifically, the library as an entity cannot make any contributions in campaigns involving the nomination, retention, or election of any person to any public office, nor can the entity make any donation to any other person for the purpose of making a contribution, nor can such entity expend any moneys from any source, or make any contributions, to *urge* electors to vote in favor of or against state or local ballot issues, referred measures, or recall measures. This includes making contributions to its own ballot initiatives once the official ballot language has been adopted.

WHAT A TRUSTEE CAN DO:

- A trustee may expend up to \$50 of district funds on letters, telephone calls, or other activities making statements or answering questions concerning the issue.
- Districts may expend public money or make contributions in-kind to disperse fair and balanced information on any issue of official concern before the electorate.
- This information must be factual; include arguments both for and against the proposal; and cannot contain a conclusion or opinion in favor of or against any issue addressed.
- The board of trustees is permitted to adopt a resolution of advocacy on any ballot issue or referred measure and report the adoption of the resolution by usual means other than paid advertising.

The FCPA does not prevent a public employee or trustee from working on a campaign or speaking out on an issue on their own time. A distinction is made between activity as a citizen on one's own time and activity as an employee or representative of the local government. If the individual is acting as a private citizen, they can take part in any of the political or campaign activities listed above, just like any other person.

A library employee "on the job" must be careful not to violate the FCPA and has restrictions a non-governmental employee would not have. The table below is a summary of permitted and prohibited activities.

ACTIVITY	PERMITTED	NOT PERMITTED
Public Presentations	During the workday, employees may respond to unsolicited questions with strictly factual answers regarding a campaign issue. Those answers should not tend to urge a particular vote. Employees may make presentations that express a position on a ballot issue or a candidate off the work site and outside of employee work hours.	It is a violation of state law to campaign or support a political cause while “on the clock.” Staff need to use good judgment to avoid the perception of championing a cause as a library employee. “Work time” includes all times employees are on duty during regular or overtime hours or in attendance as a work requirement beyond regular work hours. Employees may not use their official authority or influence to interfere with an election, engage in political activity while wearing an official uniform, or engage in political activity while using a library vehicle.
Library-owned Materials and Equipment	A library may expend library resources to create an unbiased factual summary on any issue of official concern before the electorate that includes arguments both for and against a proposal. The summary may not contain a conclusion or opinion in favor of or against any particular issue. The “Blue Book,” prepared by the Colorado Legislative Council, is a good source for this type of information on statewide and local ballot issues.	Library-owned materials and equipment cannot be used to prepare, post, sort, or distribute any materials or information advocating a position concerning an election. This includes the use of email, fax machines, copy machines, paper, telephones, bulk mailing permits, etc.

ACTIVITY	PERMITTED	NOT PERMITTED
Interacting with Other Employees	Employees may campaign outside of work time.	Employees should not advocate for or against a candidate or ballot issue with fellow employees while on duty. Employees shall not distribute to fellow employees any materials that express a position on campaign issues during work time.
Phone Calls	Employees may give factual responses about a campaign issue on department phones in response to an unsolicited telephone inquiry. Employees may make phone calls stating their position on a candidate or ballot issue on their own time and on their own personal phone.	Employees may not work to promote or defeat a candidate or ballot issue while using department phones.
Wearing of Campaign Buttons, Posting Literature, etc.	Employees may wear campaign buttons, post literature, etc. outside of work time.	Employees should not wear, display, or distribute campaign materials at the work site.
Fliers	Employees may distribute campaign materials on their own time outside of the work site as long as the distribution is not done in connection with any official activity.	On election day, electioneering materials are specifically prohibited from public display in a department facility being used as a polling place.

ACTIVITY	PERMITTED	NOT PERMITTED
Voting Campaign Contributions	Employees may encourage citizens to register to vote and give them information on registration, absentee voting, and polling locations. Employees may make personal contributions to any candidate or organization supporting or opposing a ballot issue.	Employees may not solicit or accept cash or other campaign contributions during work time.
Public Records Act	Employees should respond to Open Records Act requests from candidates or election organizations in the same manner they would respond to such a request from the public at large.	Employees must not release employees' names, addresses, or telephone numbers unless such information is in response to a request under the Open Records Act.

STATE LEGISLATIVE NETWORK

Colorado State Library Trustee Email List (COLT)

This list has a few emails per month, sent only by the State Library, with important news and information for library trustees.

Trustees also have a broader imperative: to work for improved library services across the State of Colorado. This can be accomplished by becoming informed about the structure of legislative activities across the state, learning to network with others who are concerned with improving libraries for the benefit of every citizen of Colorado, and developing a process with their director to ensure that all relevant legislative information is disseminated in a timely way to every trustee on the board.

<https://cvl-lists.org/mailman/listinfo/colt> cvl-lists.org

SPEAK UP, STAY INFORMED

Trustees should be aware of political issues that impact academic, school, and special libraries as well as public libraries.

THE COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF LIBRARIES (CAL) LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE (CAL-LEG)

CAL-LEG acts as a resource for local legislative networks; to monitor legislation, and to provide information on library issues to local, state, and federal officials. Information about legislative initiatives for library funding and the legislative process at the state level can be found on the [CAL Legislative Committee web page](#).

To take library advocacy a step further (i.e., the national level), visit the [American Library Association's advocacy page](#).

Do you know your local, state, and national elected officials? Have you contacted your state or national legislators about library legislation or funding? Do you discuss pending legislation at your board meetings? If not, it's never too late to get started! You can [look up your legislator](#) and send them your library's story.

- Know the key issues, needs, facts, and statistics of your library.
- Keep the library in the loop of major town/city boards.
- Get to know your municipal officials and state legislators.
- Encourage officials and legislators to use the library (e.g., town boards could hold meetings at the library, legislators could hold constituent hours at the library, etc.) and invite them to library events (programs, celebrations, award ceremonies, etc.).
- Establish an ongoing relationship with local media.
- Keep abreast of statewide initiatives and participate in advocacy efforts, such as Library Legislative Day.
- Attend trustee training workshops such as CALCON trustee track.

Speak out for your library as the institution that provides the taxpayer the “biggest bang for the buck,” an essential element in the education of the lifelong learner. You can use [the Calculator](#) to find the value of your library use.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

An active publicity program is essential to communicate the dissemination of needed services, and for the growth and even survival of public libraries. Time, effort, and funding must be devoted to marketing library services. Publicity is the continuous process of informing the community and creating a positive public image.

It may be difficult for librarians, trustees, Friends, and library users to believe, but many people are unaware of the wide range of resources and services available at the public library. In today's media-oriented society, libraries must market their services creatively using all forms of publicity. As noted in various sections, the library plan, budget, policies, and activities provide ample opportunity to spread the word.

Consider using the following public relations tools:

- Public service announcements on local television, radio, and cable
- Library website
- Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.)
- Newspaper and community organizations' newsletters, articles, and photographs
- Information distributed by moving companies, Welcome Wagon, and other local organizations that support new residents
- Billboard space (donated) and community bulletin boards
- Club meetings, civic associations, PTA, and similar organizations
- Local business contacts
- Displays and exhibits
- Special events
- Bookmarks, booklists, flyers, brochures, posters

Public relations is much more than the flash, pizzazz, and hoopla often associated with PR. Publicity and advertising are not sufficient alone to cultivate good relations between the public and the library. Public relations is the person-to-person effort to put libraries into the lives of the people. Good service to the public is the foundation for good PR. It is EVERYBODY'S job! The trustees, director, staff, and even the buildings and resources affect the public image of the library.

KEY TRUSTEE ROLE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

As ambassadors of goodwill, trustees play a crucial role in public relations. Their involvement helps to sustain the organization's credibility in the public eye. There is a natural role and a major responsibility for the library trustee in public relations. Trustees serve as the public's representatives to provide library direction and guidance. The trustee needs to keep in close touch with the people, listening to their perceptions of the library, their still unmet information needs, and the role they want the library to fulfill. At the same time, the trustee needs to serve as a spokesperson for the library to help people understand its role and any problems in fulfilling that role, as well as how to use library services.

As community leaders and citizens working as public employees without compensation on the library board, trustees are in a unique and key position to carry out this two-way communication. By virtue of their unpaid public service role, trustees can speak out and respond to the public in ways that the library director and staff, as employees, cannot; or which if they did, might well be perceived differently by the public.

Some of the most effective public relations for the library is done by members of the library board who may not know that public relations is what they are doing when they talk to their friends about the library. Everything said about the library adds to the community awareness of an important service, and trustees need to take advantage of the many opportunities they have to boost the library.

BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Establish a public relations policy.
- With the library director, develop a positive PR plan and schedule for the library.
- Recognize PR as a total and continuous function of the library. Assign members to participate in PR events. Support staff training and involvement in PR programs.
- Evaluate the PR program and public service.
- Allocate funds for PR activities and/or volunteer specialists to offer help.
- Educate the board and expand awareness of Public Relations.

INDIVIDUAL TRUSTEES:

- Be vocal and visible.
- Listen to the community. Be well informed, use the library, and spread the word.
- Attend meetings of community organizations to speak and gain information.
- Convey the progress, plans, and policies of the library to individuals and groups.
- Ask the opinion makers in your community to be library supporters.
- Support Friends of the Library group and recruit members.
- Spot gaps in the library's information program and make suggestions.
- Work closely with municipal and other officials.
- Tell people what trustees do, who they are, when they meet and how they can be reached.
- Talk about the philosophy and merits of quality library service.
- Provide facts and figures to persuade people.
- Learn about other libraries and services statewide and nationally.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- Schedule visits to media representatives in the community.
- Ask the media representative what they can use, in what form they wish to receive it, and how often they can give coverage.
- Ask representatives for any ideas they have for giving publicity to the library.
- Let them think of interviews, public service announcements, or even regular shows for local radio and TV stations.
- Compile a helpful information kit to give each media representative. For example: a summary of the library's goals, objectives, and priorities; current services; flyers or brochures; a listing of special upcoming events; and even a review or two of some new books that might be of personal interest.
- Absorb, but do not promise. Ideas, comments, or even complaints should be taken back to the board and the library director for discussion, and as tools in planning future public relations programs.

WORKING WITH THE LOCAL NEWS MEDIA

The local media (newspapers, TV, cable, and radio) are a vital factor in all public relations efforts. The local media can, and should be, one of the library's best friends. Therefore, the library board should be familiar with all media resources in the community and should learn how best to utilize these resources.

While each board should have a designated spokesperson (usually the board chair), library trustees should make it a point to personally know the editors, publishers, TV and radio station managers, editorial writers, plus media staff who may be involved in reporting on libraries or municipal matters. As determined by the library board planning, there should be regular "keeping in touch" efforts. Media contacts should be invited and encouraged to attend library board meetings and kept informed of meeting date schedules, agenda items, special meetings, and any other special events. Key media contacts should be on mailing lists for such items as reports and announcements. Library board members should also keep in mind the value of using the letters to the editor column. This is a means of directly reaching a large audience.

Generally, the library director is the information source concerning library activities. The trustees, director, and staff should clearly understand and observe their respective roles in communicating with the media.

PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARY COOPERATION

The need for strong, ongoing cooperation between public libraries, trustees, school boards, and key educational administrators has long existed. Productive partnerships enhance public relations, advocacy efforts, and—most importantly—library services for all.

A vision of ideal cooperation between public and school libraries reflects the following:

- Every student has access to a well-resourced school library that is fully integrated into the instructional program and staffed by qualified, professional school library personnel.
- The public and school communities understand that public and school libraries have distinct missions but share common goals and work together to mutually support those goals.
- Every community provides its residents with access to a free public library.
- Every resident has access to the full range of library and information resources in the community.
- Citizens and municipal officials value and demand excellence in library services, ensuring adequate and sustained financial support to achieve it.

SUMMARY

Trustees are responsible for promoting public awareness of and support for the library's mission, services, programs, and spaces. Trustees are the key to building local elected officials and other stakeholders into library prophets so when a representative of the local library is not in the room, others are there to promote. Building these relationships ensures the public is knowledgeable and in support of public libraries.

It is critical to ensure the public recognizes the public value of public libraries. Not only are trustees advocating for the local public library on whose board they serve but also engage in state, national, and international level discussions to strengthen all libraries.

TRY THIS: THE POWER OF YOUR LIBRARY'S STORY

Everybody has a library story. Keep it short & simple. When you are speaking to people, ask to hear their library story. Then share a library story.

THE LIBRARY STORY

Identify a project/services/focus

Identify a hero (patron) who has participated in this project/service/focus. Describe this individual.

What problem was the patron trying to solve?

What was the impact to the patron by engaging in the library project/service/focus?

The hero is not the only one. Find data to show how many others have been impacted by the library.

- LRS.org
- Board report
- Community Reports
- Director
- Census
- Strategic Plan

That is all you need to demonstrate the impact and relevance of your library.

THE ASK

Now, if you have a related ask, add at the end. Ideally, you will have already built relationships by showing the impact and relevance of the story before you request something from those you are speaking.

If an ask, what are you asking for keeping in mind the connection of your hero to the person you are speaking.

Who are you going to tell this story? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Commissioner | ☐ Local Chamber of Commerce |
| ☐ Representative (state, federal) | ☐ Non-Profit Leader |
| ☐ Local Tourism Board | ☐ Town Manager/Council |
| ☐ Neighbor | ☐ Bartender/Budtender/Soultender |
| ☐ Other_____ | |