National Library Legislative Day

Media Training: Hooking the Media All Year Long

- What is public relations? Free coverage newspapers, magazines, television, radio. Public relations gives libraries, nonprofits and businesses the power to make the news. Reporters who might be interested in library stories include education reporters, technology journalists, government/politics reporters and local feature reporters.

This week: May 4-5, 2015

- Take photos of your meetings this week
- Use this ALA media template: http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/nlld/press
- Or, prepare your own release:
  - Do’s:
    - Do select a spokesperson for your group before you release a statement
    - Do read the newspaper, magazine, TV show that you want to pitch. Know the publication's target audience and their interests.
    - Do pitch your story to the appropriate reporter
    - Do understand that everything is not newsworthy
    - Simplify your language and avoid the use of complex or vague industry jargon
    - Do respond quickly to media inquiries and emails—they're time is of the essence.
  - Don’ts:
    - Don’t SPAM! Don’t call a journalist 20 minutes later to see if they received your email. Send the release once, then follow up when necessary. Never harass a reporter.
    - Don’t sent paragraphs upon paragraphs of text—keep it concise
    - Don’t tell a media reporter that you need to review a copy of the story before it runs—everything is on the record!
    - Don’t go on live TV if you have never practiced in front of a camera
    - Don’t do a media interview if you are not prepared for negative questions. Make the time to develop talking points before every interview.

- Try to make the pitch as personal as possible. What has the reporter written about in the past?
- “If the pitch is relevant to me, it works 100 percent of the time.” – Digital Marketing Guru Mitch Joel
- Make the pitch exclusive if you can. Most writers are looking for a something exclusive, not the same thing that just landed in thousands of other inboxes all across the land.
- Do not include links in your pitch email.
- Mention that you will provide photos in your pitch email.

August 2015

- Use the summertime slow-down to continue the library advocacy conversations. Follow up on your May Hill meetings by thanking congressional staff, and inviting them to come visit your library. Many libraries take advantage of slow end of summer in August and September to invite policymakers and business leaders to visit their libraries. Inform legislators and community leaders of library programs and events. Doing so allows legislators to get good press, while you also have the opportunity to position your library as a political bonus for local elected officials.
- Examples of leaders include federal officials, school board members, principals, mayors, state legislators and council members.
Three ways to get policymakers to come to your library:
1. Invite them to an event that provides public exposure
2. Invite them for a private library tour
3. Invite them to speak on a panel or forum

The ALA Washington Office recently hosted a free webinar on how to bring legislators in to your library. The video is available online: vimeo.com/46364776

As an example, in 2012, Branch Manager Martha Hutzel, who is the of the John M. Porter Memorial Library in Stafford, Va., brought Rep. Rob Wittman in to her library to speak to members of the North Stafford Rotary Club.

Take photos/video of the meeting, release statement. Share photos with reporters and on social media.

October/November 2015
Throughout the year, use library programs to make the news: back-to-school programming and homework assistance, author events, job training events and classes and immigration support. Keep policymakers abreast of all the ways that libraries are helping their communities.

Libraries can also use the election season to use another media tactic: Meeting with the editorial board of a local paper to advocate for an increase in library funding.

Steps to planning meeting:
1. Conduct media research and find out the editorial meeting guidelines
2. Set objectives for your editorial meeting supporting your cause
3. Bring background materials fact sheets, statements, past releases, names and numbers for contacts. Make the case in a 2-3 minute opening statement, supported by facts. Address opposition’s criticisms on the issue summarize your position.
4. Following the meeting send a thank you note to each in attendance

January 2016
Libraries can use this time to make the news by releasing their own annual reports to media, detailing library usage over the past year. Has circulation gone up? Libraries can showcase:
   o Annual visits. This includes in-person visits and online visits. For example, the Arlington Public Library in Northern Virginia boasts that they are the most viewed website in the county. That’s an accomplishment that should be shared.
   o Collection items checked out
   o Programs held
   o Number of patrons who used library computers.
   o Highlight any awards you may have won in the past year.

Example: ‘The Iowa City Public Library sees an increase in usage’

February 2016
Promote your collaborations with other community institutions and organizations.
Cecil County Library, for example, is working with the business community:
http://www.ala.org/united/sites/ala.org.united/files/content/powerguide/cecil-county.pdf

ALL YEAR
Get Attention for your State Level Advocacy Efforts

Notify the press about local and state issues that impact libraries. Prepare press releases on your advocacy campaigns.
Write letters to the editors
Write and place op-eds on local library issues
If you are going to organize a large presence at a community meeting, notify the press via a media advisory. Example: In July 2014, more than 100 Miami library advocates to speak at a community
meeting about the year’s property-tax rate. They received coverage of their advocacy efforts in The Miami Herald.

**Get Attention for Your Library’s Effort’s to Support Federal Level Policies**

- Local libraries have the power to make federal library policy news local. Only local library leaders have the power to add a local context to national library policies news. By doing so, you are helping leaders in the ALA Washington Office bring national awareness to federal policies that impact libraries.
- Example: ALA is advocating for the modernization of the E-rate program. How does your library work to bridge the digital divide in your community? Are you experiencing broadband adoption challenges? Capitalize on ALA federal advocacy efforts by reaching out to the local media. Pay attention to ALA advocacy efforts by subscribing to the District Dispatch, the ALA Washington Office blog ([http://www.districtdispatch.org/](http://www.districtdispatch.org/)).
- More examples:
  - USA PATRIOT Act = Discuss local civil liberties discussions in your libraries
  - Workforce Investment = public and community college libraries can receive funding for employment skills training and job search assistance from the recently-passed Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. What is your library doing to support jobseekers?
  - E-rate/Broadband connectivity = Discuss need to support for library broadband in your library
  - Education policies = How are libraries supporting students?

**May 2016**

- Give embargoed information about National Library Legislative Day to local feature reporters

**References**