



# From Advocacy to Activism

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Library Link NJ - December 2021

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EveryLibrary



## EveryLibrary | 501(c)4 Political Action Committee

- Election Days and Negotiations
- Support for Legislative Agendas
- Outreach and Activism to the Public



## EveryLibrary Institute - 501(c)3 Research and Policy Think Tank

- Research Agenda
- Training Programs
- Programmatic Partnerships and Coalitions



# *Theory and Practice*

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# *Theory of Advocacy*

If your advocacy framework  
assumes an adversarial situation  
then you have a real problem.

- Education
  - What are libraries capable of today?
- Orientation
  - Who are librarians and library workers today?
- Ideation
  - What could a shared solution look like?
- Identification
  - What resources do we need in place to authentically collaborate?
- Activation
  - When will we both commit to a collaboration?

## *Advocacy is . . . .*

A process that creates partnerships and coalitions around a common cause or concern.

Advocacy is a long-game.

It is focused on building relationships through an understanding a shared-values framework, purposefully aligning missions, and finding ways to realize a common vision for either people or a place.

# *Theory of Activism*

If you are not willing to be focused on your own self interest and use an active voice, all you are is hopeful.

- Based in Shared Values
  - It affirms or offends a belief
- Focused on Shared Identity
  - It builds community
- Has Integrity
  - It is honest in its motivation and authentic in its goals
- Directs Activity
  - It uses verbs and speaks in the first person
- Organizes Supporters
  - It identifies, cultivates, and empowers

## *Activism is . . . .*

Strident actions that ask for -  
and expect - a change.

Activism is short but frequent values-system-focused and identity-focused messages that are intended to move people who are otherwise unaware or inactive about an issue or idea into a close personal alignment and identification with an ideal.



# *Political Frames*

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Funding for libraries is a political decision.

Directly or indirectly, how we choose to tax ourselves and what values are expressed in our budgets, policies, and programs are fundamentally political in nature.

## *Political Decisions*

## Three Political Narratives

- Progressives
- Conservatives
- Libertarians

"Three Languages of Politics" by Arnold Kling

*The stories we  
like to tell  
ourselves*

My heroes are people who have stood up for the *underprivileged*.

The people I cannot stand are the people who are *indifferent* to the oppression of women, minorities, and the poor.

*Progressive*

My heroes are people who have stood up for *Western values*.

The people I cannot stand are the people who are *indifferent* to the assault on the moral virtues and traditions that are the foundation for our civilization.

*Conservative*

My heroes are people who have stood up for *individual rights*.

The people I cannot stand are the people who are *indifferent* to government taking away people's ability to make their own choices.

*Libertarian*

What happens when you are variant from or at odds with your audience, your funding partner, or your decision-maker?

*You and your team*

*vs.*

*you and your audience*



# *Supporters and Partners*

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How people are wired  
makes all the difference in  
your messaging and  
approach

# *How people listen*

Four ways that people are wired to care about... anything.

- Compassionately Engaged
  - Populations and people
- Pride of Place
  - Interesting, thriving, and prosperous
- The Data Shows It
  - Data about outcomes as lens
- Concerned or Fearful
  - Focused on filling gaps



# *Why people listen*

Four factors that build parties and movements

“The Political Brain”  
by Drew Westin (2008)

- Shared Values
  - Does the campaign or candidate align with my deeply-held belief(s)?
- Shared Identity
  - Does the campaign or candidate represent me in some way?
- Personal Characteristics
  - Do I like the candidate or admire the campaign?
- Specific Policies
  - Will the candidate or campaign do what it says when I am not looking?

# *Who are the Allies of Activists?*

Why someone is motivated to act on behalf of an ideal

- Relational Supporters
  - “Knows” libraries and librarians
- Ideological Supporters
  - Aligned with what librarians and library workers do
- Aversion Supporters
  - Would like to avoid bad outcomes based on principles or ideals
- Access Supporters
  - Motivated by feedback, praise, or gratitude

# *Stories that Resonate*

Four potential approaches to root your campaign

- Stories of Success demonstrate your competency
  - Scale or replicate
- Stories of Failure demonstrate your integrity
  - Avert or fix
- Stories about people you care about
  - Find a common concern
- Stories about why you do what you do
  - Find a common cause

# *The Activist's Playbook*

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## Activist's Guiding Principles

- Must focus on identifying, cultivating, and empowering supporters
- Must not focus on building users
- Must ask for and allow actions
- Must allow people to participate as donors, volunteers, and do-ers

*Users are not necessarily supporters and supporters don't need to be users.*

## Guiding Principles for Activists

- Collect Contact Information
- Create Pathways to Involvement
- Be Authentic
- Be Urgent
- Segment Your Audiences
- Ask Questions of Your Base
- Stay on Message

*Activism That Works*

- People have one of three budgets to spend:
  - Money
  - Time
  - Good Name
- Marketing or advertising is marketing or advertising
- If it does not have an ask it is advertising not activism

## *Understanding the Critical Differences*

## Guiding Principles

- Collect Contact Information
- Create Pathways to Involvement
- Be Authentic
- Be Urgent
- Ask Questions of Your Base
- Stay on Message
- Segment Your Audiences

*Activism That Works*



- AtoZ Databases and ReferenceUSA
- Facebook and other social media
- Analytics on Demand, Orange Boy  
“look alike”
- Social Hacking
- Borrow
- Build

A Like or Share is Not an Activist

*Find More  
Audiences*

HOW: Compassion, Pride, Concern

WHY: Shared Values, Shared ID, Policy

WHO: Relationship, Ideology, Aversionary

WHAT: Extend Success, Fix Failure

*Focus Your  
Message and  
Differentiate  
Your Messages*

HOW: Compassion, **Pride**, Concern

WHY: **Shared Values**, Shared ID, Policy

WHO: Relationship, Ideology,  
**Aversionary**

WHAT: Extend Success, **Fix Failure**

*Focus Your  
Message*



# *Advocacy Principles*

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- “Marketing Tomorrow” build use
- “Marketing Yesterday” builds support
- Programmatic Partners are unactivated allies
- Coalitions are core to advocacy campaigns
- You are the only expert on libraries and librarianship and you must define the negative
- No one will solve your budget or policy issue for you

## *Advocacy Principles*

- Marketing *tomorrow* to encourage use and uptake.
- Marketing *yesterday* to tell the story of your impact.
- Spend a few dollars and a few minutes every day to do it.

# *Marketing*

Funding-Focused Partnerships and Coalitions are based on:

- Shared Values
- Common Mission
- Aligned Vision

*Coalitions are Focused on Funding or Policy Not Programming or Services*

- Economic Development
- Workforce and Re-tooling
- Early Childhood and Grade Level Reading
- COVID-Slide
- Housing and Food Security
- Safety and Violence
- Well-being

*Who Else Cares?*



Your “Book” Carries Your Values,  
Vision, Mission:

- Strategic Plan
- Building Plan
- Technology Plan
- Budget
- Annual Report

## *Coalition 101: Boards*

## Empowering Staff to Carry the Message:

- Your own values about libraries?
- Your own vision for your community?
- Why you do this work?
- What happens if you don't?

## *Coalition 101: Staff*

Talk about Plan B and Plan A

- Plan A = what happens if we are properly funded or empowered
- Plan B = what happens if we are under-funded or disempowered

Then please stick to it.

*Experts Must  
Define the  
Positive and the  
Negative*

New Money only comes from four places: Reallocations, Outside Aid, New Taxes, or Cuts

New Policy or Legislation is introduced by an elected official but written by engaged stakeholders

*Rewrite the Budget*

*Write the Bill*



# *Taking Inventory*

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How to put this into practice

- During the ongoing COVID crisis, policymakers, elected officials, voters, and philanthropic funders want to see their money go to effective programs and competent staffing in ways that deliver results.
- They want to support programs and projects that can be measured and justified through data as well as stories.
- They are looking for the right way to apply funding and resources - whether taxes or philanthropy or grants - to solve problems.

## *What Funders Want Now*

What are the agendas of your elected officials and voters - and how does your library map to those agendas?

- Interesting Places
- Thriving Places
- Prosperous Places
- Avoid Duplicative Services
- Deliver Efficient and Effective Services

## *Understanding Your Boss's Agenda*

- Organization's own budget.
  - Members' financial well-being.
  - Scaling back up to support success.
  - New revenue is needed.
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- How do we put this new frame to work?

## *Library Link NJ Agenda*





# Questions, Comments, and Wrap-Up

Please use the chat box



**LibraryLinkNJ**

*THE NEW JERSEY LIBRARY COOPERATIVE*



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Library Link NJ | 14 December 2021

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