

Advocating for the Humanities: How to make your message resonate

Presentation to Delaware Library Legislative Day
March 24th, 2015

What are the Humanities:

The humanities are academic disciplines that study human culture. The humanities use methods that are primarily critical, or speculative, and have a significant historical element—as distinguished from the mainly empirical approaches of the natural science (*Wikipedia*)

The humanities can be described as the study of how people process and document the human experience. Since humans have been able, we have used philosophy, literature, religion, art, music, history and language to understand and record our world. These modes of expression have become some of the subjects that traditionally fall under the humanities umbrella. Knowledge of these records of human experience gives us the opportunity to feel a sense of connection to those who have come before us, as well as to our contemporaries. (*Stanford*)

Why are Libraries Important

- Libraries are Community Builders
- Libraries are Community Centers for Diverse Populations
- Libraries are Centers of the Arts
- Libraries as Universities
- Libraries are Champions of Youth

(as collected on publiclibraries.org)

Libraries As Community Builders

- Libraries help revitalize struggling or depressed neighborhoods and downtowns.
- Libraries are important partners in sustainability.
- Libraries special collections grow out of specific community needs
- Archives preserve historic artifacts, oral histories, and more
- Libraries are places where people come to know themselves and their communities.
- Libraries serve as catalysts for addressing social problems.
- Libraries, which champion, promote and reflect important demographic values are a part of the communities political life.
- Library buildings as architectural structures that are culturally relevant.
- Libraries provide important business resources, especially for small local businesses.

Libraries are Community Centers for Diverse Populations

- Libraries help to ensure that non-English speakers see themselves represented in their communities.
- Libraries provide immigrants with helpful information about, and opportunities to connect with their new communities.
- Libraries provide information, resources and support for patrons w/ disabilities.

Libraries are Centers of the Arts

- Libraries provide access to nonmainstream points of view and give voice to local artists.
- Libraries provide opportunities for free classes that encourage art appreciation as well as art participation.
- Libraries provide access to the arts for all, not just those who can afford them.

Libraries as Universities

- Libraries serve as the “people’s university.”
- Libraries offer opportunities for remote access, making it possible for those who can’t get to the library to still access the library’s cultural and educational offerings.
- Libraries go beyond providing content to enabling patrons to create their own content.
- Libraries promote civil discourse.

Libraries as Champions of Youth

- Libraries teach teens important life skills.
- Free tutoring, homework help programs, and summer reading programs for kids and teens help bridge the economic divide that impacts students' academic performance.
- Libraries are important partners in child development.

How To Be Your Best Advocate:

Get to know your Member & their Staff

- 1) Know what they look like
- 2) Know what committees they serve on
- 3) Know their voting behavior/record
- 4) Know what they belong to (clubs, caucuses, memberships, etc)
- 5) Know their staff (who does what and how to reach them)
- 6) Become a trusted resource

Be timely with your requests

- 1) Provide ample time (if possible) with your requests
- 2) Read the newspaper and keep up to date on action of interest
- 3) “Keep it simple, stupid”
- 4) Keep up to speed with fellow Advocates and work together
- 5) Always be thankful

Be Present: Be Heard

- 1) Schedule annual meetings with your Member(s)
- 2) Be timely with requests
- 3) Keep their time a top priority
- 4) Answer likely questions proactively
- 5) Relay community outreach & contributions
- 6) Message correctly
- 7) Prioritize battles/issues
- 8) Find allies & work together

Keep Up the Drum Beat

- 1) Follow up on meetings w/ unanswered questions/additional information
- 2) Check in quarterly: lobbying is a year-round effort
- 3) Think about Op-Eds or press releases on issues/ great news
- 4) Become a valued resource for your Member(s) and their staff
- 5) Send occasional/worthwhile invitations to both Members and staff
- 6) Go to their local events

How to Make Libraries a Priority

- Identify and cultivate your Champions
- Build coalitions
 - Consider all advocates (grass roots, grass tops)
- Pinpoint critical Members
- Follow procedures
- Again, be timely
- Accept occasional defeat
- Always be thankful for effort
- For any sized success, "sound the horns"

Don't just focus on the State

- Regularly reach out to DE Congressional Offices
 - Both in the State & DC
- Get to know Congressional staff
- File appropriations requests annually
- Utilize national associations for advocacy information & issues [here](#)
- Advocate for Library Services and Technology Act and other notable accounts
- Invite Congressional Members and staff to visit
- Keep your 1 pagers up to date and send in annually

Questions?