



everylibrary

Building voter support for libraries

OLBA Spotlight: How to Strategically Engage with Your Community

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VOTELIBRARIES

The Toolbox of Our Community



- First Nationwide “Political Action Committee” for Libraries
- Different than a Membership Organization or Federation
- 60 Ballot Campaigns to date with 45 wins
- \$200 million (US) in stable tax funding wins

- Talking with Voters about Libraries
- Support for Negotiations and Lobbying about Funding
- Trainings like this....
- #votelibraries 2016 - Advocacy campaign during recent election

- The Political Librarian journal



Civic Attitudes We Track

US and Ontario

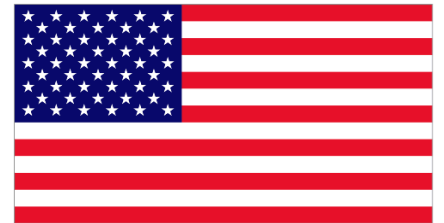
US Voter Attitudes

37% will Definitely vote yes for the library

37% will Probably vote yes for the library

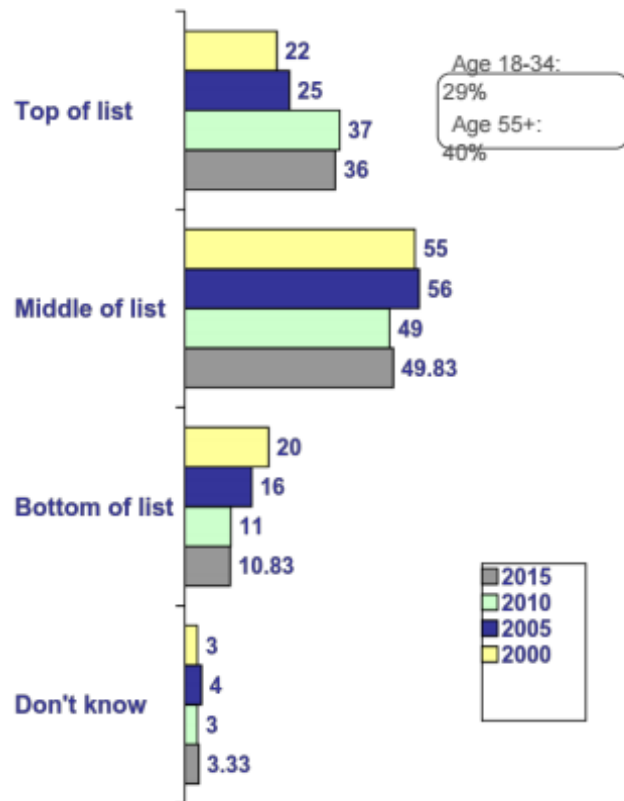
26% will Probably or Definitely vote no or
may vote either way

From Awareness to Funding, OCLC (2008)





Benefit of Public Libraries Relative to Other Municipal Tax-Supported Services



Ontarian Attitudes

Benefits of Public Libraries

36% believe it is vital
49% believe it is important / fine
11% don't value it

66% of Ontarians does not use the library for themselves, if at all.

22% Never
46% 'With a family member'



Ontarians' Attitudes about Libraries

Over 50% of Ontarian respondents *strongly believe* the following:

- Public libraries are important because they promote literacy and a love of reading
- By providing free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed
- Having a public library improves the quality of life in a community

OFPL 2015



Value Props are Not about “Me”

The value of certain services (e.g., for young children, new Canadians, and the unemployed) has increased over the past five years. (OFPL 2015)



A majority of Americans (69%) feel libraries are doing a good job of providing a safe place for people to hang out or spend time ... and roughly half think their libraries contribute “a lot” to their communities in terms of helping spark creativity among young people (49%) and providing a trusted place for people to learn about new technologies (47%). (PEW 2016)



Compassion at its Core

64% of Ontarians believe that closing the library would have a major negative impact on the community but only 34% believe it would impact their very own families in a major way.

(OFPL 2015)



66% of Americans say the closing of their local public library would have a major impact on their community although notably, just 33% say this would have a major impact on them personally or on their family.

(PEW 2016)



Activating Non-Users for Library Advocacy

Why they care

Library Use Does Not Matter

The research revealed an important distinction between the public library user and the public library funder. Not every library user is a library funder; not every library funder is a library user. **A voter's willingness to support increased library funding is not driven, or limited, by library use.** In fact, the advocacy research found that there is little correlation between frequency of library visits and willingness to increase funding for libraries.

- OCLC "From Awareness to Funding" p. 7-2

Library as Transformative Force

For the target supporters, the library is not perceived as just a provider of practical answers and information; the most committed supporters **hold the belief that the library is a transformational force.**

- OCLC "From Awareness to Funding" p. 7-4

The Image of the Librarian Matters

They recognize the value of a **'passionate librarian'** as a true advocate for lifelong learning.

- OCLC "From Awareness to Funding" p7-4

What Activates Constituents for a Library Issue?

- Is the reason for the tax - and process to get there - legitimate?
- Is there a difference between Plan A and Plan B?
- Where is my money going? and
Who is spending my money?

Getting Endorsed & Building Coalitions

- Vision for the community is the key story to tell
- You will either have more money than people, or more people than money
- **Issues are changed through coalitions**
- Endorsements create legitimacy
- Proxies who speak for you are necessary

Coalitions 101

How to build consensus for your budget

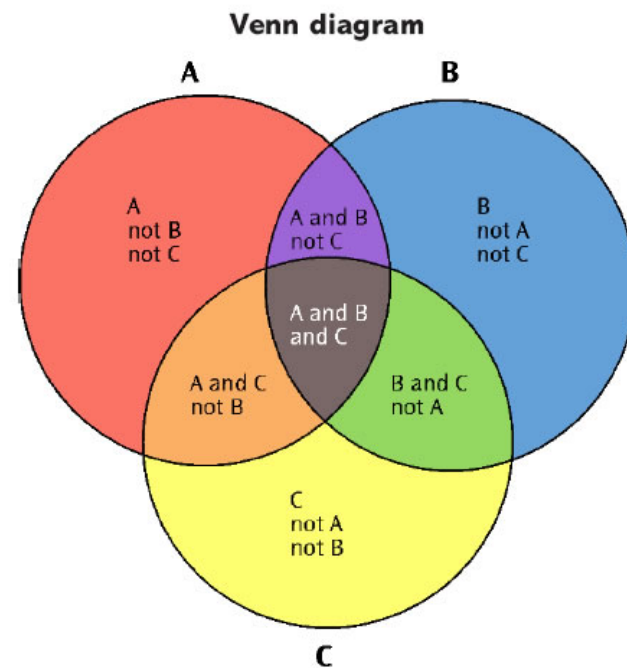
ID an Existing Coalition or Build a New One?

Shared Values Framework?

Common Cause?

Common Concern?

Never 100% overlap or
you should just merge orgs



Building a New Coalition for the Library Budget

What is your big issue or big goal?

Who else cares about the same initiative or shares the same goals?

Did you know that last year MCPL...



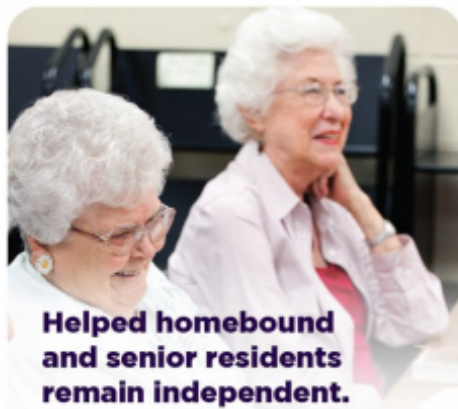
Provided materials and services to help children read at grade level.

3.4 Million+

Children's materials checked out

33,500+ Summer Reading Program participants

237,000 Literacy-based program attendees



Helped homebound and senior residents remain independent.

20,000+

Library-By-Mail materials delivered to 370 customers

8,700+ Seniors attended free tax-help programs



Contributed to the economic vibrancy of our community.

600,000 Public computer sessions, many used by job seekers

45+ Small businesses launched or improved with assistance from the Library

Information from 2015-2016 MCPL fiscal year



9,189,534

Items checked out



3,403,116

Virtual branch visits



426,498

Program or outreach attendees



3,975,369

Visits to Library branches



963,225

Public computer and Wi-Fi sessions



1,989

Hours of weekly public access to Library staff and resources

A **YES** Vote Means:



The renovation of 28 Library buildings and the construction of 6 new or replacement Library buildings to serve the needs of modern Library users in growing communities.



Expansion of access to Library services through additional operating hours and improved in-branch internet bandwidth.



Expansion of Library services for young children, students, seniors, small business owners, and others.



Increased investment in Library materials including physical and digital books, movies and music, online instruction for every age, research tools, and informational databases to meet the demands of growing communities.

A **NO** Vote Means:



Aging Library buildings will see maintenance minimized to basic repairs. Renovations and expansion would be eliminated and spaces would become more crowded with a rising population.



Possible reductions in branch hours of operation, staff, and scaled back internet bandwidth.



Decreased Library outreach and partnership development, and a phase-out of some services for adults, teens, and small businesses.

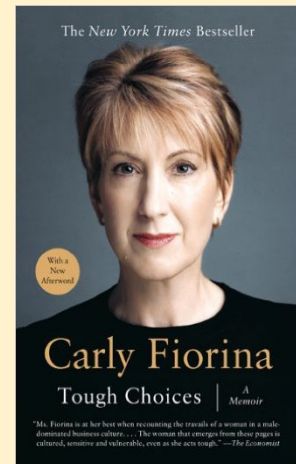
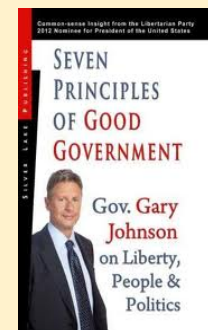
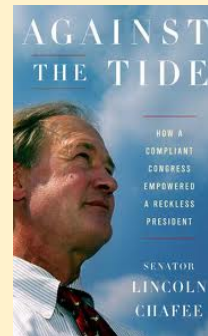
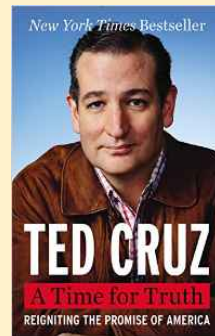
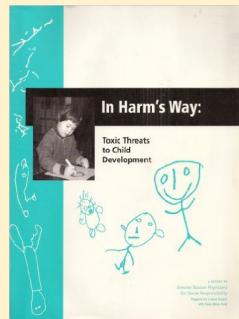
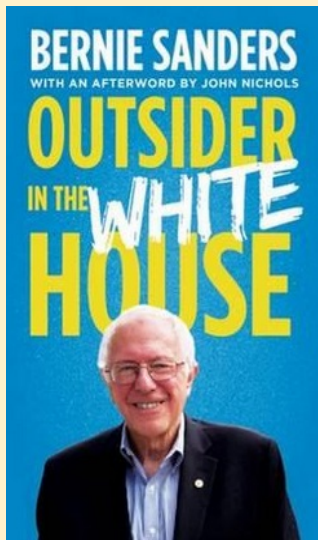
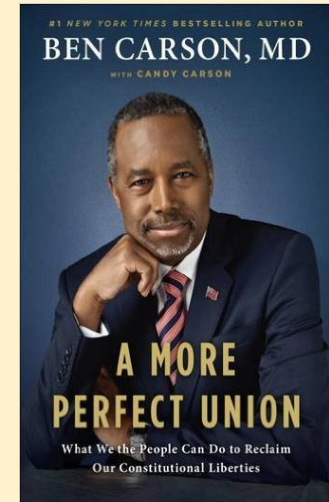
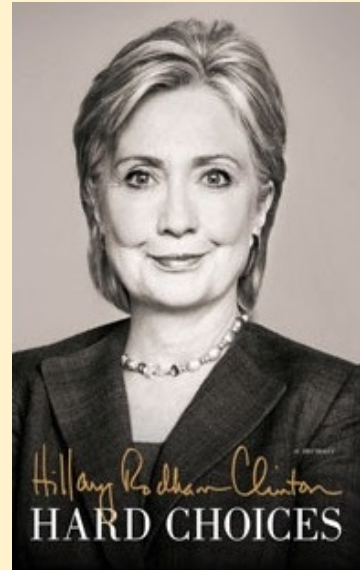
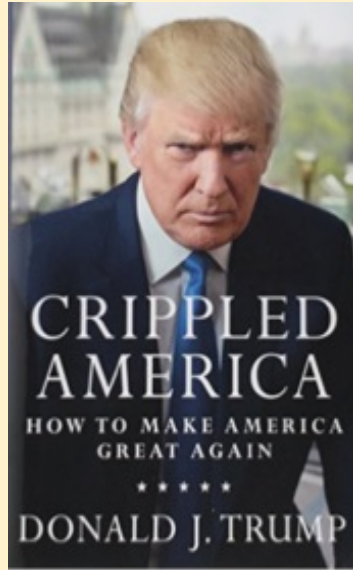
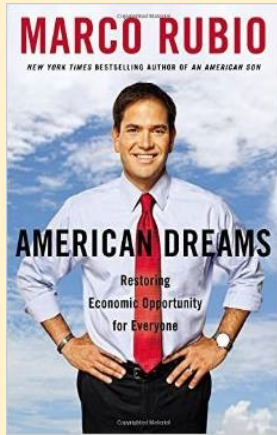


Reduction in the current investment in online and in-branch resources such as physical and digital books, movies, music, magazines, online instruction, research tools, and informational databases.

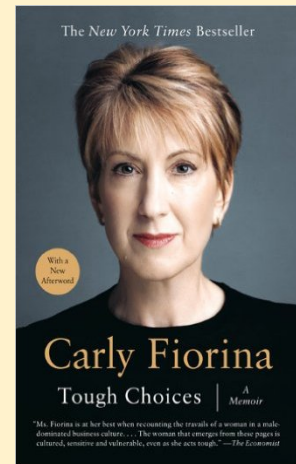
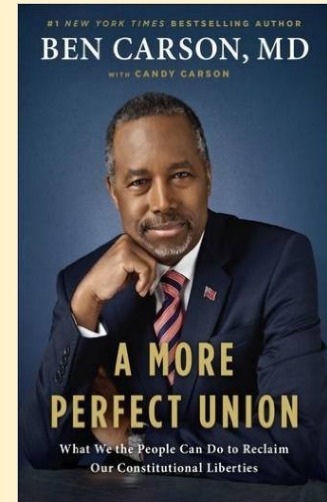
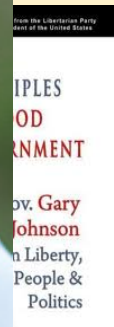
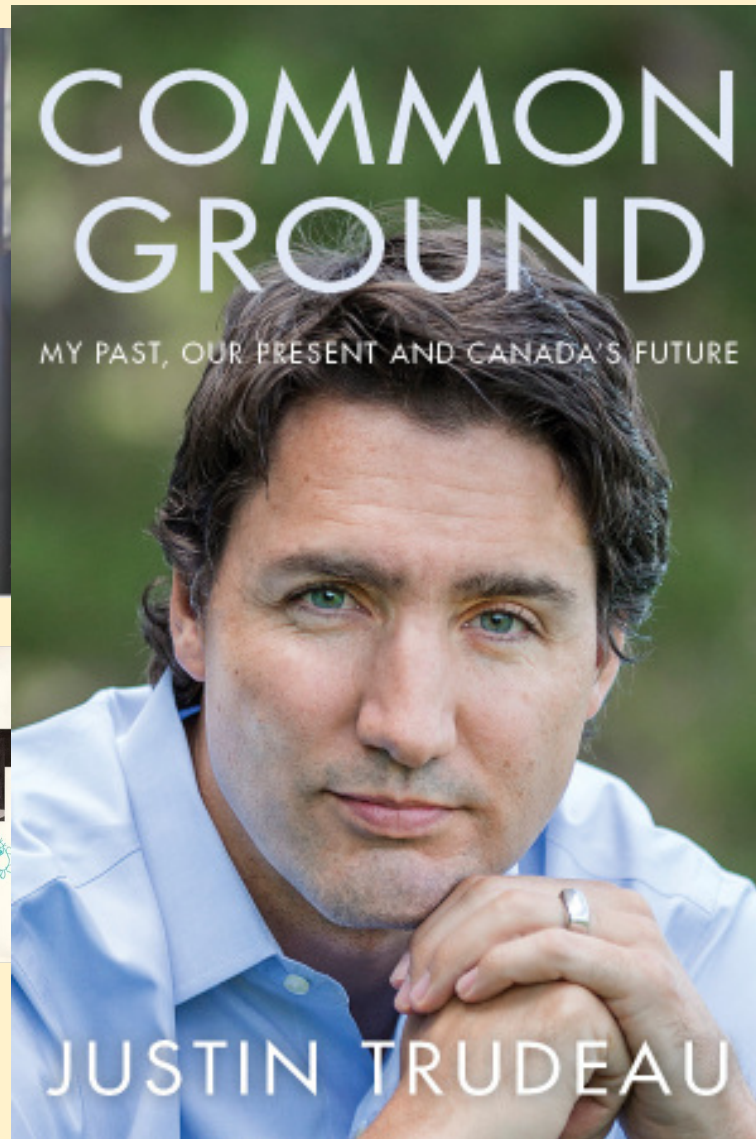
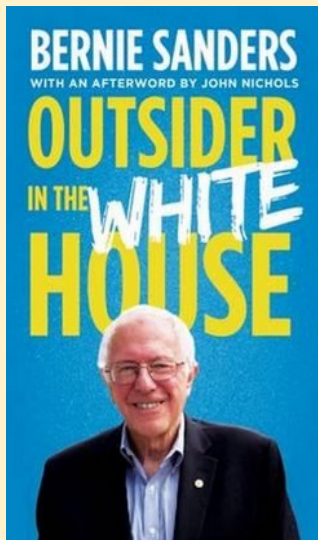
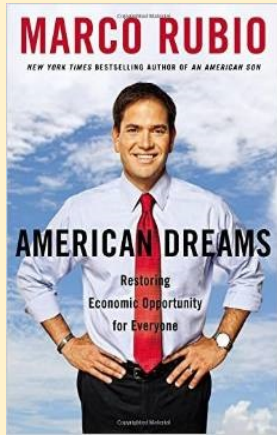
How Candidates “Surface”

- Write the book
- Tell their story
- Be seen as an expert
- Start an Exploratory Team
- Get endorsed
- Launch the Campaign



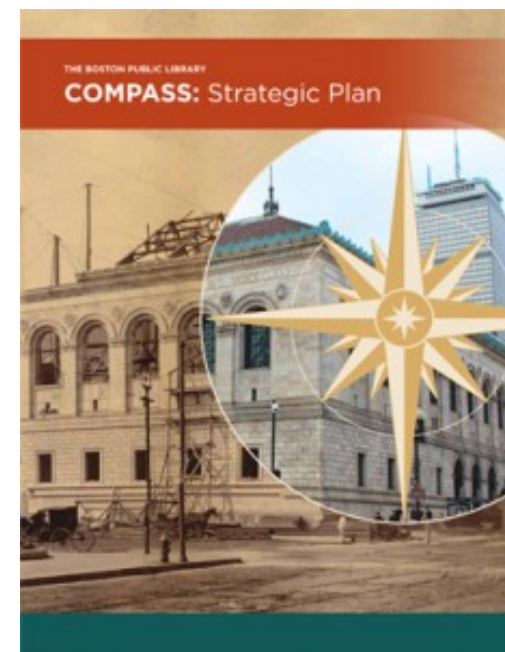


2016 Candidates Books



*What is Your Book?

Strategic Plan
Management Plan
Service/Programs/Collections Plan
Fundraising Goals
Financials and Fiduciary



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Writing a “better book”

Change the way you do community surveys

Ask Questions about staff and not just about institutions

Ask Question to non-users as much as you ask users

Non-users have a perception of value but no current experience.

Best Practices for Community Assessment

Field questions in ways that breakthrough the “4th wall”

Oversample non-users

Go to their homes; Go door-to-door and to unusual places;
Locations where non-majority or non-privileged pops
congregate

Great Relationships are Based on Mutual Outcomes

Organizations, Agencies and Stakeholder

Coalitions are Built on Coffee



Drink Coffee w/ Potential Coalition Partners

1. Educational Partners
2. Social Welfare and Religious Partners
3. Governmental Partners
4. Civic Partners
5. Business Partners
6. Politicians
7. Media

Keep it Relevant



Who Cares about Education?

1. Educational Partners

Pre-K and K-12

College/University

For-Profit Tutoring

Private/Public After-School Programs

Three Messages: Library as Educational Partner, Library as Resource Extender,
Library as Gap Filler

Who Cares about the Same Populations?

2. Social Welfare and Religious Partners

Counseling Centers

Food Pantry / WIC

Jobs Training Center

Literacy Centers

Youth Oriented

Human Services

Three Messages: Library as Resource Extender, Library as Third Place,
Library as Start Point

Who Cares What Your Tax Rate is?

3. Governmental Partners

Parks and Recc

Public Safety – Police and Fire

Public Works

Public Employee Unions

Transit and Development

Three Messages: Library as Contact Place, Library as Info Point, Library in Common Cause

Who Wants to Change the World a Bit?

4. Civic Partners

Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis

Heritage and Local History

GLBT, Immigrant and New Resident

Arts & Culture

Environment and Livable Communities

Three Messages: Library as Social Leveler, Library as Neutral Good, Library as [insert organizational cause the library already champions]

Who Doesn't Know about Libraries?

5. Business Partners

Local Chamber / CVB

Startups and Entrepreneurs

Small Businesses – Service or Retail

Big Civilian Employers

Realtors

Three Messages: Librarian as Business Reference Resource, Library as Training Space,
Library as Retail Anchor

Who has Constituents?

6. Politicians

Incumbents

Insurgents

Local / Provincial / Federal

Three Messages: Library as Good Governance, Library as Responsible with Budget,
Library as [insert their pet project]

Who Needs to Hear it First?

7. Media and Local Networks

Print, Radio and TV

Social Media Groups

Bloggers

Networkers, Connectors (Gossips)

Key Messaging is always your campaign themes and talking points

Keep it Relevant



Thinking About Coalitions

Who has “power” and who has “Influence” in these stakeholder groups?

Articulate why you *think / believe / hope* that these organizations will care about your big issue or goal

Joining an Existing Coalition

You don't need to re-invent the wheel

Extending Your Influence

What systems exist in your community that align with libraries? Where are your natural partnerships? Who are you regularly frustrated with?

Provincial and Local Systems:

Boards and Commissions

Coalitions of Common Cause

Coalitions of Common Concern

What Existing Coalitions are Right for You?

Economic Development

Early Literacy and Early Childhood

Grade Level Reading

Housing and Food Security

Immigration

Safety and Violence



In Ontario and Your Town

Ontario Early Years Centre
Parenting and Family Literacy Centres
YMCA
Service Canada
Ontario Works
Community Legal Clinics
Local crisis centres
COSTI Immigrant Services
Welcome Centre Immigrant Services



Talking to Elected Officials about Libraries

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How can you be the Dread Pirate Roberts....?

“Your brains, his strength, my steel”

Electeds are your neighbors. And they have the checkbook.
Present yourself as if you are there to help them accomplish their goals (not the other way around). This is an opportunity to start a relationship (not one off deal)

You are the best expert on 21st century libraries in your community.
You have on-the-ground, actionable intelligence about the neighborhood your elected is representing.

Making a New Ask

1. Where does revenue come from?
2. What are the priorities of my elected officials?
3. What is “regular order” for the lawmaking or rulemaking body?
4. How can I make this easy for them?

Pro-Tips for Elected Officials

It is a discussion, not a debate.

Unless you know the elected official is actually opposed or is on the record as true friend to libraries, assume they are neutral, interested, and unaware.

Conventional Wisdom Says....

Ask “open ended questions” ...

What do you think of libraries?

What can libraries do for you and your position?

What can we (librarians) do to support your work?

Two Key Question for Elected Officials

- 1) How do you see libraries fitting into this legislation?
- 2) How do you see librarians putting this idea to work in the community?

Making a “New Ask” Easier

We have developed “model language” that would address....

Would you like to see it?

Next Steps Today...

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Plan A / B Frames

Plan A = What happens in / for / to the community if it passes

Plan B = What happens if it fails

These are the official plans. One will be enacted on election or budget day. The other won't.

Plan A | Plan B

- What happens if it passes....
- What happens if it fails.....
- Talk about 'features'
- But focus on the 'outcomes'

Building a New Coalition for the Library Budget

What is your big issue or big goal?

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Articulate why you *think / believe / hope* that these organizations will care about your big issue or goal

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Thank You

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