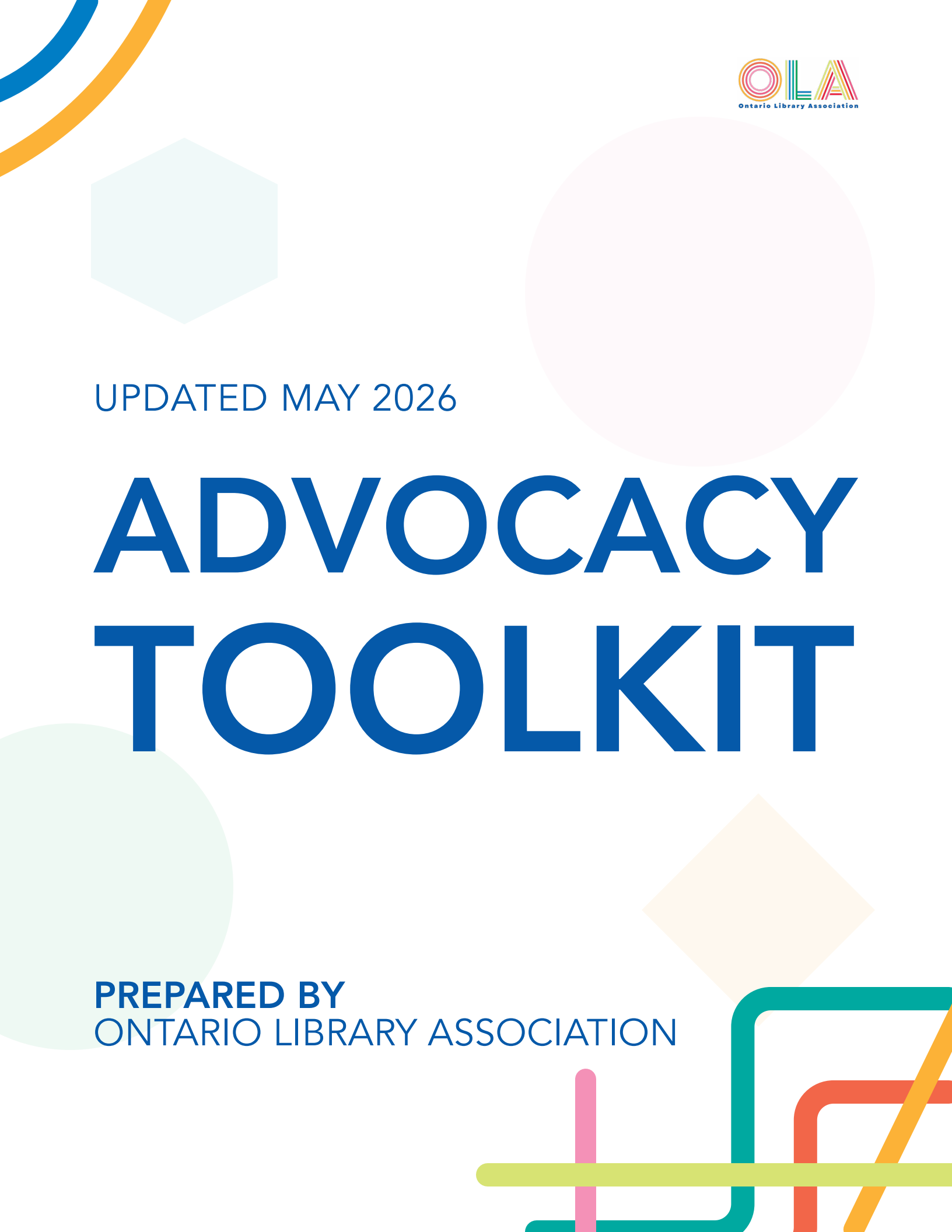


The background of the cover is decorated with various geometric shapes: a light blue hexagon in the upper left, a large light pink circle in the upper right, a light green circle in the lower left, and a light orange diamond in the lower right. Additionally, there are several colorful lines (blue, orange, teal, red, yellow, pink) that curve and intersect across the page.

UPDATED MAY 2026

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

PREPARED BY
ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	Introduction
8	Everyday Advocacy: Small 'a' Advocacy
10	Relationship Building
10	Know Your Audience and Align Your Messaging With Their Priorities
12	Demonstrating Library Impact
13	TEMPLATE: Advocacy Issue Worksheet
14	Advocating in Your Community
15	Engagement for Frontline Workers
16	Meeting with Political Representatives
16	HOW TO: Make the Most of Informal Meetings and Encounters
18	HOW TO: Request a Meeting with Your Local Political Representative
19	TEMPLATE: Local Representative Meeting Request Email
19	TEMPLATE: Crafting a Value Statement and Elevator Pitch
19	TEMPLATE: Crafting Your Ask
20	Advocating During Elections
21	Communications
21	HOW TO: Make the Most of Social Media
22	HOW TO: Write and Share a Media Release
23	TEMPLATE: Media Release
23	Internal Communications
24	Advocacy in Action
24	Setting Goals and Measuring Impact
24	Leveraging Canadian Library Month
25	GUIDE: How to Host a Library Day During OPLW
26	Intellectual Freedom and Responding to Challenges
26	Maintaining Momentum in Your Advocacy Work
28	Advocacy Checklist: 10 Actions You Can Take
29	Background: How Libraries are Funded
29	School Libraries
29	Public Libraries
30	First Nation Public Libraries
30	Academic Libraries
30	Health Libraries
31	Resources to Learn More
31	Advocacy
31	Public Library Impact Research
32	School Library Impact Research
33	Academic Library Impact Research
33	Health Library Impact Research
33	Government Documents and Information Sources

Ontario Libraries: Advocacy Toolkit

PURPOSE

This toolkit was created to strengthen the capacity of OLA members — across all library sectors — to advocate confidently and effectively for their libraries, and to grow a broader, more diverse community of library advocates across the province.

Effective advocacy begins with reflection. As you engage with this toolkit, you may find it helpful to consider questions such as: *Am I the right person to carry this message? How can I ensure my voice amplifies others rather than unintentionally displacing them?* These are not barriers, but opportunities to practice advocacy with care, awareness, and integrity.

Members come to advocacy with different levels of experience and comfort with political engagement. This toolkit is designed to meet you where you are, offering guidance, building confidence, and supporting you in identifying the most meaningful role you can play, whether that's leading a message or strengthening it from behind the scenes in a supporting role through everyday advocacy.

VISION

OLA members are informed and empowered to secure greater support for and understanding of libraries, in line with the [2025-2028 OLA Strategic Plan](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Content in this toolkit has been adapted from a number of resources, including the Canadian Association of Public Libraries (CAPL) Library Advocacy Now! Toolkit (2011), Wendy Newman's Advocacy Unshushed MOOC (2015), the Ontario Non-Profit Network's Elections Toolkit (2018), and the Ontario Library Association & Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL)'s Elections Toolkit (2025).

This toolkit was first prepared by the 2019 OLA Advocacy Committee and OLA staff, with feedback and guidance from OLA's Councils and Board of Directors, Special Libraries Committee, the OLA Indigenous Advisory Council, as well as Wendy Newman, Margie Singleton, and Kate Jonhson-McGregor.

2019 Advocacy Committee Members: Dana Vanzanten (Co-Chair), Jesse Carliner (Co-Chair), Sherry Lawson, Dawn Telfer, Jason Bird, David Thornley, Richard Reid, and Kerry Badgely.

The **2026 Update** was prepared by the OLA Board of Directors Advocacy Sub-Committee and OLA staff, with support, feedback and guidance from OLA's Councils and Board of Directors, OLA Advocacy Committee, Dayna DeBenedet, and Vicki Whitmell.

2026 OLA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ADVOCACY SUB-COMMITTEE

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Something to add? If you have questions, comments, or ideas for topics not covered in this toolkit, you can always email info@accessola.com.

Note on Templates: All toolkit templates and worksheets can be downloaded [here](#).

INTRODUCTION

“

Advocacy is a planned, deliberate, sustained effort to raise awareness of an issue or issues. Advocacy is thus an ongoing process whereby support and understanding are built incrementally over an extended period of time.

– Canadian Association of Public Libraries (CAPL), Library Advocacy Now! Toolkit

What Is Advocacy?

No matter what type of library you are involved with – Academic, Public, School, Health, Special – support from your local stakeholders, decision-makers, and leaders is essential to ensuring that you and your library have the resources and connections you need.

Advocacy Is About:

- Building positive relationships with stakeholders, decision-makers and local leaders;
- Demonstrating how your library is an important asset to your community, school, or institution; and
- Raising awareness about what your library needs and the challenges you face.

Advocacy Is a Spectrum: Small “a” vs. Big “A” Advocacy

When people think of advocacy, they often picture large public campaigns or meetings with government officials. In reality, advocacy takes many forms, and both small “a” and big “A” advocacy play important roles in strengthening libraries.

Small “a” Advocacy

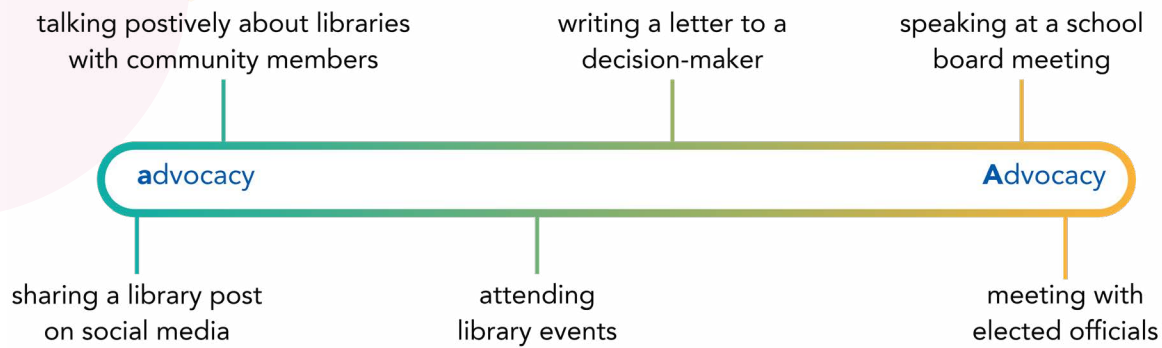
Small “a” advocacy happens in everyday moments. It includes the conversations you have with patrons, students or colleagues, the relationships you build within your organization and broader networks, and the ways you highlight the value of your library’s services in your daily work. These actions may feel informal, but they are foundational, shaping how people understand and support libraries over time.

Big “A” Advocacy

Big “A” advocacy is more formal and often more visible. It involves engaging with decision-makers, contributing to policy discussions, participating in campaigns, or speaking publicly about library issues at the municipal, provincial, or national level. This type of advocacy can influence funding, legislation, and system-wide change.

Both forms of advocacy are interconnected. Strong small “a” advocacy builds the trust and stories that make big “A” advocacy more effective. Whether you’re sharing a success story with a community member or meeting with an elected official, you are contributing to a broader culture of advocacy that helps libraries thrive.

The Spectrum of Advocacy



Why Do Libraries Need Advocates?

Libraries continue to be among our most trusted and valued institutions and are an essential part of our social infrastructure. Yet in today's social, political, and economic climate, that broad public support cannot be taken for granted.

In recent years, libraries have become more visible sites of public debate, particularly around issues of intellectual freedom and collection development. At the same time, economic constraints are straining public resources, and libraries are often asked to do more with less. Increasing political pressures, misunderstanding of the library's role and value, and competing institutional priorities make advocacy more important than ever.

Advocacy helps ensure that decision-makers and communities:

- Understand your impact
- See your relevance to priorities
- Recognize the consequences of underinvestment

Whether through everyday conversations or coordinated efforts, advocates play a critical role in ensuring that libraries remain resilient, responsive, and accessible to all.

Advocacy Is Part of the Job — For Everyone

Whether you are a library CEO, frontline worker, school library professional, or solo librarian, everyone has a role to play in advocating for libraries. **Advocacy will look different depending on your context**, your community, and your place within it. As you consider your role, it can be helpful to reflect on questions such as: *What is my position? Whose story am I telling? How can I ensure my voice supports and amplifies others?* At times, this may mean stepping forward to lead; at others, it may mean creating space or supporting someone else to be heard.

Know Your Context

Advocacy looks different depending on where you work.

- External advocacy: engaging government, funders, and the public (public, school)
- Internal advocacy: influencing leadership within an institution (academic, health, special)
- Community-led advocacy: working with your community to shape priorities (First Nation Public Libraries)

Some Examples of Advocacy:

1. A school library collaborates with its local public library to send a meeting request to their local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) to talk about the role of the libraries in the community.
2. A frontline staff member shares a story about how a seniors' program recently helped participants learn to identify AI-generated content online.
3. A school library professional prepares a report for administration showing how their new literacy programming contributed to improved EQAO scores by 10% the following year.
4. A library encourages their local City Council to pass a resolution in support of an increase in provincial funding for libraries during Canadian Library Month.
5. An academic library collaborates with faculty to embed research support into coursework, strengthening the library's role in instruction and student achievement.
6. A hospital library tracked a 40% increase in literature search requests during a clinical redesign and used the data in a budget meeting to demonstrate its role in supporting patient care.
7. A librarian informs Band Council of a provincial award they received for their programming to demonstrate the library's recognized impact beyond the community.
8. A library shares a social media post about a job seeker who used library resources and staff support to apply for work and secure an interview.

Feeling Nervous About Advocacy?

It's completely normal to feel nervous when stepping into advocacy work. For many, it doesn't come naturally; it's a skill that develops over time with practice and experience. You don't have to have all the answers or feel completely confident to get started.

What matters is that library voices are in the room when decisions are being made. Your perspective, shaped by your work and community, is valuable and your voice matters.

Remember, advocacy is planned, deliberate, and sustained over time, making it something you can practice both individually and collectively to build your confidence!

Your Association's Role in Advocating for Libraries

You and your library are not alone in your advocacy efforts.

Associations like the Ontario Library Association (OLA) have a role to play in supporting advocacy at the provincial level.

Currently, OLA is working with provincial partners like the [Federation of Ontario Public Libraries \(FOPL\)](#), [The Association of Library Consultants and Coordinators of Ontario \(TALCO\)](#), and others to support advocacy issues impacting libraries.

OLA has a **V.I.P.** approach to advocacy: help members demonstrate the **Value** of libraries, **Influence** decision-making, and positively **Position** libraries and the people who work for them.

What are we doing?

OLA and FOPL work with a government relations firm to develop long-term relationships with decision-makers at a provincial level. In consultation with the library sector, we are working together to develop strategic advocacy priorities. Some examples of OLA's provincial advocacy work include:

- Coordinating Library Day at Queen's Park (an advocacy day where we facilitate meetings between library sector representatives and MPPs);
- Coordinating advocacy around Ontario's annual provincial budget process, including organizing deputations before the Minister of Finance and the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; submitting a written submission; and arranging meetings with MPPs and provincial ministers;
- Exhibiting at meetings and conferences such as [Association of Municipalities of Ontario \(AMO\)](#), [Administrators of Medium Sized Public Libraries of Ontario \(AMPLO\)](#), [Administrators of Rural and Urban Public Libraries of Ontario \(ARUPLO\)](#), [Rural Ontario Municipalities Association \(ROMA\)](#), and more;
- Conducting research to support and strengthen advocacy efforts, such as examining the impact of school libraries on student success;
- Training and empowering our members to be sector advocates through resources such as this toolkit, education sessions, and volunteer opportunities to delegate and meet with elected officials;
- And much more!

TIP

Advocacy is a long-term process of relationship building

Advocacy relies on stores of trust built up over time. The best way to accomplish this is to develop a personal, convivial relationship with members of your community and with decision-makers.

Federal Advocacy

For advocacy issues with a national scope, the [Canadian Federation of Library Associations / Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques \(CFLA- FCAB\)](#) is our voice. The Federation was established to facilitate collaboration in library advocacy at the federal level. OLA is a member of CFLA. OLA also works with other national organizations on federal advocacy issues, such as [The Partnership, Canadian Urban Libraries Council \(CULC\)](#) and Canadian School Libraries (CSL).

EVERYDAY ADVOCACY

Small 'a' Advocacy

“

Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world.

– Howard Zinn

Advocacy doesn't only happen in formal meetings or public campaigns. It happens every day, in the conversations you have, the relationships you build, and the ways you make your work visible to others. This is often called **small "a" advocacy** — the ongoing, informal actions that shape how people understand and value libraries.

These everyday moments are powerful. They build awareness, trust, and support over time, creating the foundation that makes more formal advocacy efforts possible.

Examples of Everyday Advocacy:

- Sharing stories about how your library supports your community, through everyday conversations or on social media.
- Building relationships within your organization and across your networks.
- Making intentional book recommendations with readers that help support Canadian authors, illustrators, and the Canadian publishing industry.
- Creating book displays that highlight current issues and library values (e.g., intellectual freedom).
- Planning or participating in programs tied to libraries, such as [Freedom to Read Week](#), [Dear School Library](#), or [Canadian School Library Day](#).
- Gently correcting misconceptions about libraries and their roles – using it as an opportunity to educate and shift perceptions about the library and library staff.
- Making your support visible by wearing [library-themed swag](#) (e.g., pins, apparel, stickers, and tote bags) that spark conversation.
- Joining and engaging with your professional library association. Your membership strengthens the association's collective voice in its advocacy efforts.

These actions may feel small, but they contribute to a larger, collective understanding of the value of libraries. Remember, *all* advocacy counts!

Getting Started

You don't need to be an expert or feel completely confident to practice everyday advocacy.

- Look for natural opportunities to share what you do and why it matters
- Use clear, accessible language to describe your work
- Share real examples and stories from your local context to illustrate impact
- Be consistent — small actions over time make a difference

Every conversation is an opportunity to advocate.



Dear School Library

Dear School Library is a storytelling campaign that invites people to share “love letters” to their school libraries, highlighting the lasting impact these spaces have had on their lives. By centring lived experiences, the campaign demonstrates how storytelling can be a powerful tool for library advocacy.

The Power of Stories

At the heart of effective advocacy are the stories we tell. Data and research is important, but stories help make it human, relatable, and memorable. By sharing real experiences, whether from your own work or from those you serve, you bring advocacy to life. Your stories can help build connection, deepen understanding, and stay with people long after the conversation has ended.

Storytelling can also invite people to reconnect with their own experiences of libraries. For many, libraries are tied to meaningful personal memories — a school library that sparked a love of reading, a space that offered comfort and belonging, or a place where learning felt possible.

These memories create an emotional connection that facts alone cannot. When people are reminded of what libraries have meant in their own lives, they are more likely to recognize their ongoing value and feel invested in their future.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Relationship Building Is One of the Most Effective Advocacy Methods

Decision-makers are much more likely to be receptive to your advocacy efforts if you are already known and trusted by them. It is important to invest the time developing a personal relationship with members of your community and those with influence and power to make change happen.

Why Relationship-Building Works

- Decision-makers listen to those they already know and trust
- Regular engagement builds you into a reliable voice
- Getting to know stakeholders as people (their priorities, interests and values) can help you adapt your message to reach the right audiences
- When an issue comes up, you're already on their radar

Learn More

Boisvenue-Fox, M. (2018). [Relationships matter in politics](#). *The Political Librarian*, 4, Article 8.

Dooley, R. (2024). [Robert Cialdini's principles of influence have held up for 40 years. Here's why.](#) *Forbes*.

Know Your Audience and Align Your Messaging With Their Priorities

Whether you are doing individual outreach or developing a social media campaign, having a clear picture of your audience, their needs and their interests is essential. Ask yourself first:

- 1. Who is your target audience?** Who do you want to reach?
- 2. What do you know about them?** What are their priorities? What are their interests?
- 3. How does or can the library support these priorities?**

Get to Know Your Decision-Makers:

Each library sector has a different set of stakeholders. Some possibilities for your context may be:

- Public libraries: your library board members, local MPP, Municipal Councillor, Band Council, or other local leader.
- School libraries¹: your principal, superintendent, school board trustees, professional organizations, unions, subject matter association.
- Academic libraries: your institution's administration, faculty, leadership.
- Health libraries: hospital administration, clinical leadership, health authority decision-makers.
- Special libraries: your director, your client, funders, influential champions within your organization (even if they are not formal decision-makers), etc.

¹ In the current legislative context, the Ministry of Education has expanded its authority to intervene in school board governance, including [placing boards under supervision](#) or otherwise [limiting the role of trustees](#). As a result, decision-making authority may rest with a provincially appointed supervisor, and trustees may no longer be accessible or appropriate contacts for advocacy at the local level. If this is the case, school library professionals may choose to engage with stakeholders beyond school board trustees, including those at the provincial-level (e.g., appointed supervisor).

If you are advocating for your library **within your institution, like a university or college library, or a special library**, get to know your administration's strategic priorities. Find ways that the library can or already does align its offerings with those priorities. University libraries may also wish to connect with [Ontario Council of University Libraries](#) (OCUL), while college libraries may find it helpful to engage with [College Libraries Ontario](#) (CLO) on sector-wide issues.

For **school libraries**, consider aligning your advocacy with existing priorities and frameworks, such as your School Improvement Plan, school board strategic priorities, policies and directives (e.g., Policy/Program Memoranda), collective agreements, and [Ministry of Education curriculum](#) documents.

Similarly, if you are seeking to increase **local community support for your library**, think about the stakeholder you are trying to reach. This may be your local MPP or Municipal Council, small business owners, members of the public, or a community organization.

Identifying Decisions-Makers Through Power Mapping

Power mapping is a tool to help determine who holds power and influence over decisions you care about, their interests, and how you can reach them through your advocacy work. By mapping these relationships, you can focus your efforts where they will have the greatest impact.

Power Mapping Step-by-Step:

1. **Identify key decision-makers** - who has the authority to make decisions happen?
2. **Map influencers around them** - who already has relationships with these key decision-makers and can influence them?
3. **Assess power and position** - what is each person's level of influence and their stance on your issue?
4. **Target priority relationships** - build relationships with those with the most influence.
5. **Make a plan** - what is the best way to engage with each person?

TIP

Build Power Laterally

While identifying your stakeholders and target audience, remember to connect with your colleagues. Building strong relationships across your organization can help extend your reach and strengthen your advocacy. A colleague may have an established relationship or have access to spaces you may not. Creating a network of allies can help build power laterally and carry your message forward. Remember, advocacy is stronger together.

Municipal Associations

When connecting at a municipal level, public libraries can engage with their municipal association to support local advocacy efforts.

[Association of Municipalities of Ontario \(AMO\)](#)

[Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities \(FONOM\)](#)

[L'Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario \(AFMO\)](#)

[Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association \(NOMA\)](#)

[Ontario Small Urban Municipalities \(OSUM\)](#)

[Rural Ontario Municipal Association \(ROMA\)](#)

[Ontario Big City Mayors \(OBCM\)](#)

Speaking With a Clear and Unified Voice

Remember: If you are engaging in advocacy for libraries with MPPs or other provincial stakeholders, it is important that libraries speak with a clear and unified voice. The OLA works with the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL), libraries, and our government relations firm to develop long-term advocacy plans for libraries in line with our [Strategic Plan](#). As you undertake advocacy at the local level, you can help by staying connected.

1. **Please ensure that any local outreach you are doing aligns with OLA and FOPL's ongoing messaging.** You can learn more about our current government relations activities by checking out [our website](#). When in doubt, [reach out to us](#).
2. **Share your successes.** Do you have a great local advocacy initiative that other libraries could benefit from? Share your success with OLA and the sector.
3. **Share your concerns.** Have an advocacy concern that OLA and FOPL are not currently addressing? [Let us know!](#)

TIP

Get Help

If you are planning on undertaking a large-scale advocacy campaign, you may consider enlisting the services of an outside agency, such as a government relations firm, marketing agency or consultant. These can help with the planning and implementation and increase the impact of your advocacy.

What do we mean by 'large-scale advocacy campaign'?

A large-scale advocacy campaign is a coordinated, strategic, time-bound effort to influence public opinion or decision-making that targets system-level change (e.g., policy, funding, or legislation). Example: A province-wide campaign around school library staffing and funding, such as OLA's [Save Our School Libraries](#) campaign.

Demonstrating Library Impact

Research and evidence highlighting the impact of your library is a great way to support your advocacy efforts. Evidence can look like many things:

- a report on the social return on investment of your library (see page 32 for examples)
- highlights from recent program evaluations and customer satisfaction surveys
- stories and testimonials from library users about the impact of the library (see [Dear School Library](#) for example)
- data or research showing the impact of library programming, services, and collections on student success, graduation rates, and retention.
- and more

Evidence adds weight to your advocacy efforts, helping to demonstrate the real impact of library programming and services in your community.

See pages 31 to 33 for research on the impact of libraries.

TIP

Many free resources can support in measuring the impact of your programming and services:

- [Bridge Toolkit](#)
- [Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit \(VOLT\)](#)
- [Canadian School Libraries Research Toolkit](#)
- [The Impact of Canadian Public Libraries](#)
- [Canadian Association of Research Libraries \(CARL\) Measure Impact](#)
- [CARL Data Visualization Toolkit](#)
- [Project Outcome](#)

Any many more!

Whatever the priority, the library has a role to play:

- Improving math scores,
- Fostering evidence-based service-delivery,
- Increasing community safety,
- Engaging at-risk youth,
- Preserving Indigenous languages and cultures,
- Enhancing patient outcomes,
- And much more.

Align your messaging with the priorities of your local leaders.

TEMPLATE: [Download the Advocacy Issue Worksheet](#) →

ADVOCATING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

“

It is essential to anchor library advocacy, not in a goal of great libraries, but in a goal of great communities, however that community is defined. This (1) is a strong ethical starting point and (2) positions the library advocate as being in the community business, and therefore more supportable than being strictly in the library business.

– Wendy Newman

Libraries of all types are, at their core, public-oriented service organizations. Advocating for your library should not be limited to engaging with high-level leaders at occasional meetings – it's about being deeply embedded in your community and fostering relationships with library staff, volunteers, users, and community partners. One way you can advocate for yourself and your library is by being an active, collaborative member of the community.

In your context, this might mean...

- **School Library:** Actively supporting classroom teachers in the implementation of new technologies and advancing the board's School Improvement Plan.
- **Academic Library:** Attending faculty meetings across departments or engaging with student groups to support upcoming initiatives or events.
- **Special Library:** Connecting with colleagues about the resources available and how they can help them achieve their goals.
- **Public Library:** Establishing new partnerships with community organizations like [Indigenous Friendship Centres](#), community associations, hospitals, Business Improvement Area (BIA) groups, and social service agencies.
- **Health Library:** Setting up collaborations with clinicians, researchers, and hospital leadership to support patient care initiatives.

When you are embedded in your community, you are poised to respond in real time to concerns as they develop. Leverage communication channels to engage your community and share timely information.

Make Sure That You Are at the Table

“

To cultivate those relationships with the decision-makers and influencers, advocates have to be ‘at the table’... when the issues are raised and analyzed and solutions worthy of support are proposed. This is where the library’s resources and services are leveraged to improve the quality of life and experiences in our communities. The more deeply and productively embedded librarians are in the actual activity of community, whether it is research and development, the development of family literacy improvement strategies, or the work of teaching in a school, the greater the opportunity for the knowledge and skills of librarians, and the true potential of libraries, to be visible and relevant.

— Wendy Newman, *Library Advocacy Unshushed* (2015)

The “Ladder of Engagement”

It’s important that everyone in your community understands and believes in the incredible value that libraries bring to your community. These individuals can become partners and advocates for your library.

Think about how you invite community members to increase their engagement as library supporters. The metaphorical “Ladder of Engagement” suggests starting with something small, like following your library on social media or visiting a branch and increasing engagement over time.

Learn More

[The Engagement Ladder Theory](#)

[Read “Digital organizing 101: What is a ladder of engagement and why do I need one?”, 2016 article by Jack Milroy for Medium.com.](#)

[Read “Using the Ladder of Engagement: Turning Casual Supporters into Fierce Advocates.”](#)

Engagement for Frontline Workers

If you work on the frontlines of a library, you are already an essential team member in advocating for libraries as both a professional and as an individual.

At work, you are the face of the library and have the power to shape individuals’ perceptions of the library’s value to the community. Excellent service to users – whether customers, students, or institutional staff – is a crucial part of building positive relationships and trust at the individual level.

Relationships are the essence of advocacy. Keep it positive! Put the library’s best foot forward by showing off your love for the work that you do.

At work and at home, you can harness the power of word-of-mouth by sharing outcomes and positive impact stories when at work and when out in the community. These stories do make a difference!

Listen for stories about the impact of libraries across all sectors, so that you can share these stories in your community and in your organization.

TIP

Show Off Your Library Love

Show your library pride! Wear or carry library-themed items like tees, pins, stickers, and tote bags to spark conversations wherever you go.

MEETING WITH POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

For some types of libraries, meeting with your local representative is a great way to build a relationship and to educate them on the positive impacts of libraries and issues confronting the sector.

In general, your representatives want to get to know the important stakeholders in their communities – *that's you* – and will appreciate your perspective and the opportunity to learn about how they can be a champion for you.

Your first meeting with a new political representative should be a meet and greet:

- Take some time to ask questions
- Get to know their interests and values
- Listen carefully to their language, priorities, and constraints to better frame your message.

Be sure to highlight the ways in which the library supports the priorities that are important to the person with whom you are meeting. Come prepared with two to three impact stories that illustrate your work in action. This will help ground your message in real experiences and make it more meaningful.

TIP

People Do Things for Their Own Reasons, Not Ours

In order to be an effective advocate, **it is important to adapt your message to the concerns of your audience and consider their perspective.** Take some time to learn about your local leader and their priorities, values and interests. How does your library align with their political and/or personal priorities? As you start to build your relationship with your local representative, focus on how the library is contributing solutions to issues you know are already important to the leaders in your area.

TIP

Get Creative

Inviting a local leader to participate in a story time or an event is a memorable and fun introduction to your library. It is also a great photo op, allowing both of you to share on social media. October, Canadian Library Month, is an excellent opportunity to do this. Invite your local representative to a Canadian School Library Day or Ontario Public Library Week event at your library. See the section on Leveraging Canadian Library Month for more.

HOW TO: Make the Most of Informal Meetings and Encounters

If you run into your local representative at your library, school, or a local event, be sure to take the opportunity to engage and educate them on the role libraries are playing in your community.

You can advocate for your institution and your profession by preparing a clear and engaging elevator pitch. Practice your pitch so you're always ready to take advantage of a chance to make your case.

These informal meetings are invaluable for fostering a positive, personal relationship with an individual who may become your next representative on your local/municipal Council or the School Board.

Be sure to get their contact information and follow up afterwards. Make sure they know you're always available to answer questions!

TIP

Practise the 27-9-3 framework for your elevator pitch

In no more than 27 words and 9 seconds, communicate no more than 3 key points.

TEMPLATE: [Download the Elevator Pitch Template](#) →

DO

- ✓ **Consult your organization's leadership:** Before you engage your library in any advocacy activity, be sure that your leadership is on board and that your message is consistent with the position of your organization.
- ✓ **Stay focused:** We are most effective when we have a clear and unified message on the necessity of increased support for libraries.

The OLA works with the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries and a government relations firm to develop long-term advocacy plans for public and school libraries. These advocacy goals and plans are developed with Ontario's library sector. Please ensure that any local outreach you are doing aligns with [OLA and FOPL's ongoing messaging](#).

- ✓ **Be positive:** Libraries are providing critical services to your community, school or institution. As you engage, position libraries as contributing solutions and value.
- ✓ **Organize and be inclusive:** A well-organized meeting or event should be one where everyone is welcome. When appropriate, think about what people with barriers to participation might need – and how you can help address these.
- ✓ **Prepare:** Do your homework. Your impact will be most significant when you're able to connect our overall messaging with your local perspective and insight.
- ✓ **Get social:** Don't forget to take a picture to share on social media.

Remember: social media is a tool for engagement, not only promotion. Be creative and don't be afraid to engage in dialogue with your community and political leaders. See the section on Social Media below for more tips on using social media for advocacy.

- ✓ **Thank you:** After a meeting or event, send thank-you letters, including a contact person for further questions.

DON'T

- ✗ Ask for priorities that are outside the scope of government. See the Resources section for information on how each level of government impacts each library sector.
- ✗ Be combative.
- ✗ Make partisan statements.

In ridings that span a large geographical area, it may not be practical for all stakeholders to participate in in-person meetings.

Designate a representative to meet in the community easiest for you MPP to access – often where he or she lives or works.

Where possible, consider opportunities to include stakeholders in your meetings remotely – through video conference solutions.

What Does It Mean to Be Non-Partisan?

Partisan political activity is the direct or indirect promotion of a political party, or the direct or indirect opposition to a political party.

As representatives of the library sector, we need you to talk about and share information about our issues – which do not favour or criticize a specific political party – and foster discussion about these important matters. This is especially important during election periods, when maintaining a non-partisan approach helps ensure the credibility of both you and the library sector, and reinforces that our advocacy is focused on community impact—not political alignment. We believe strongly – and we can demonstrate – that libraries positively impact a broad cross-section of Ontarians in every community across the province.

As a sector, we have and will continue to work collaboratively and constructively with representatives of all political parties to achieve meaningful change benefitting our libraries and communities.

HOW TO: Request a Meeting with Your Local Political Representative

BEFORE YOUR MEETING

1. Ask

- Ask in person, call, email, or send a letter introducing yourself, your role and the importance of libraries.
- Request a meeting to discuss further.
- Negotiate a date, time, and location for the meeting. Let the staff know how much time you would like (shorter meetings are always more practical than longer ones) and be prepared to shorten the session if need be.

2. Prepare

- Once the meeting is confirmed, put together a team to attend the meeting. The larger the team, the more organized you'll need to be at the meeting. Where relevant, it's helpful to have a mix of staff, leaders (e.g., board members), and, if possible, beneficiaries of your service or activities who can provide personal stories of how key issues impact them and how solutions are supporting or will support them.
- Review your key message and your ask – most local leaders will expect you to have a request of some kind for them.
- The size of the group will guide how long individuals can speak. In general, keep the individual presentations to a maximum of three minutes each. More experienced members can help others to organize what they will say. Identify a "chair" for the meeting, someone to start the meetings and help keep the conversation on track.
- Identify someone to take notes, so everyone has the results of the meeting on paper.
- Familiarize yourself with your local representative by reviewing biographical information and any recent media coverage, especially if you do not have an existing relationship.
- Stories strengthen your message. Think of your own examples to convey the impact of libraries on individuals and families in the local community and/or schools.

In some cases, you may wish to keep your meeting one-on-one. It can be easier to develop a relationship with your local representative in a smaller, more personal meeting.

In many cases, OLA and FOPL will have materials prepared with key messages and specific provincial "asks" for the school and public library sectors. Get in touch!

3. Inform

- Tell your representative's staff who will attend the meeting.
- If you are meeting with a provincial representative, let OLA know about your meeting – it helps us coordinate province-wide advocacy to know what is happening at the local level. You can help keep us informed by emailing lkwok@accessola.com.

DURING YOUR MEETING

4. Meet

- Arrive on time and go in as a team.
- Have the chair open the meeting, thank your local representative and briefly outline the purpose of the meeting and the agenda. All participants should introduce themselves. From there, the chair should manage the agenda, making way for the speaker for each item. The representative or their staff may ask questions of individual speakers and the chair should be able to subtly keep the agenda on track.
- Draw upon your own personal experiences and use local examples.
- Be passionate and respectful, not argumentative and confrontational. Listen carefully, seek to understand different perspectives, and respond thoughtfully.
- Be prepared to be flexible. Your representative may not have time or want to go through the full agenda. The chair should be direct so that the most important items are discussed.
- Finish by thanking the representative.
- Focus on conveying the importance of Ontario's libraries in a local context.
- It's okay if you don't have an answer to a question in the moment. You can offer to follow up with the information after the meeting.
- Leave behind some materials and/or swag, with your business card. An effective leave-behind is short and to the point – outlining just your key messages/your ask.
- Thank them for their time, provide a contact person for further questions or information, and indicate that you will follow up.

AFTER YOUR MEETING

5. Follow up

- Send a thank you letter and include any follow up information that you promised.
- You may be asked in the future to follow up by email and phone with your local representative to seek additional support or to request further information.

Providing a written copy of the "ask" helps them to remember you and to be advocates for you and your interests.

If possible, take a photo with your local representative to share on social media. This is a great opportunity for both your local representative and the library.

Templates

TEMPLATE: [Local Representative Meeting Request Email](#) →

TEMPLATE: [Crafting a Value Statement and Elevator Pitch](#) →

TEMPLATE: [Crafting Your Ask](#) →

Advocating During Elections

Elections are a critical opportunity for the library sector to engage political parties and candidates and secure their support in addressing the key challenges facing libraries and the individuals and communities who rely on them. The goal of election engagement is to highlight the vital role of libraries, while raising awareness of the priorities and issues facing the sector.

What Can You Do?

1. Meet with Candidates or Campaign Staff

Meeting with candidates or their campaign teams is one of the most effective ways to build relationships and raise awareness about the value of libraries. These conversations provide an opportunity to share local perspectives, highlight community impact, and position libraries as essential to learning, economic development, and community well-being. Even brief meetings can help establish ongoing connections and identify future champions for libraries.

2. Write or Email Local Candidates

If meeting in person isn't possible, reaching out by email or letter is a valuable alternative. A short, clear message that outlines key priorities and includes a question or call to action can help you understand where candidates stand on issues affecting libraries. Written outreach also ensures your message is documented and can serve as a reference point after the election.

3. Engage through Social Media

Social media is a powerful tool for raising awareness and amplifying your message during an election. Share stories, data, and examples that highlight the impact of libraries in your community. Tag candidates, connect your message to local priorities, and use consistent messaging to help ensure your voice is part of the broader public conversation.

4. Participate in Community Events and Candidate Forums

Town halls, debates, and community events offer valuable opportunities to engage candidates in public settings. Asking thoughtful questions and raising library-related issues helps increase visibility and encourages candidates to consider libraries as part of their platform. These moments also help demonstrate that libraries are a priority for the communities they serve.

5. Make the Most of Informal Engagement Opportunities

Not all interactions need to be formal. Casual encounters—at events, in the community, or within your library—can be meaningful opportunities to introduce yourself, share key messages, and build rapport. These brief conversations can leave a lasting impression and open the door for future engagement.

Learn More

Read ["Librarian as Candidate."](#)

Read ["From Awareness to Funding: Voter Perceptions and Support of Public Libraries in 2018."](#)

Follow [EveryLibrary](#)

COMMUNICATIONS

Whether your communications are supported by a team of experts or off the side of your desk, strategic communications is a key component of advocacy.

HOW TO: Make the Most of Social Media

You can help raise your library's profile through social media engagement. A post on social media can be used to share the impact of libraries in your community, to demonstrate your support for libraries, or raise awareness of the issues confronting the sector.

DO

- ☑ Tell your story and celebrate all the amazing things you're doing in your library.
- ☑ Be FUN, be moving, be inspirational – make people feel something about what they are hearing.
- ☑ Be visual – make the most of good photos, GIFs, and video to capture attention. Share a picture of your latest display or your programs in action.
- ☑ Be succinct – keep your message clear and focused. People engage more with short, easy-to-understand posts.
- ☑ Keep it current – use social media to share and respond to developing news stories.

Setting up Google Alerts for library-related news in your community is a great way to stay on top of stories.

- ☑ Engage – use social media to connect with people in your community, not as a one-way messaging board for promoting the library's programming.

Social media is an opportunity to connect with your community and be part of the conversations that matter.

- ☑ Work within larger channels – if you are a smaller public library or a library within an institution, use your municipality or institution's social media channel.
- ☑ Use hashtags like #ILoveONLibraries, #LibraryLove, #SchoolLibraryJoy, and #LibrariesForLife to join the broader conversation in the library community.

DON'T

- ☒ Be combative or negative – use social media to foster positive relationships with your community.
- ☒ Use social media only for announcements. It is great to promote your library's events, but social media should also be about engagement. If you are ONLY using social media to promote your programming and services, you are missing a crucial opportunity to build relationships with your community.
- ☒ Bite off more than you can chew – if you have limited resources to dedicate to social media, choose your engagement wisely. Be selective about which platforms you use, and how and where you post.

Ideas for Social Media Content

- Showcase your spaces.
- Highlight items from your special collections.
- Give a window into your work with “behind the scenes” content, such as curating book displays.
- Capture events and learning in action – author visits, workshops, Forest of Reading winner celebrations, etc.
- Highlight value and impact of programming with stories and profiles from your community.
- Write articles or blogs to share on social media.
- Tie your content to current events, trends, or cultural moments, like doing a [“Stacked Poetry” exchange](#) during playoffs with your city’s opponent’s library.
- Lean into viral online trends and memes to capture youth audience.
- Use video and visual storytelling strategically. Short-form video (e.g., TikToks), carousels, and GIFs tend to outperform static posts.

TIP

There is some great library-related advocacy content on [EveryLibrary’s Facebook](#) page.

What Makes an Effective Media Release?

A strong media release is concise, informative, and easy for journalists to use. It typically includes:

- Concise, attention-grabbing headline
- Strong opening paragraph that summarizes the key points (who, what, when, where, why)
- A timely or newsworthy angle (e.g., links to current events, trends, or community priorities)
- Quotes from key voices (e.g., library staff, partners, or users)
- Contact information for follow-up or interview requests
- Links to additional resources, if relevant

HOW TO: Write and Share a Media Release

Every library is full of great stories. A well-crafted media release is a powerful tool for sharing those stories with local media—news outlets, radio and TV stations, community publications, and podcasts—helping you reach a broader audience.

What’s Your Story?

Most media outlets receive far more stories than they have space or time to publish, so your media release needs to be clear, relevant, and engaging. What sets your story apart and makes it interesting enough for readers, listeners or viewers to care? Ground your media release in storytelling fundamentals:

- **Compelling characters:** Who is at the heart of this story? Highlight the individuals or communities impacted by your program, service, or initiative. This could include students, researchers, patients, educators, or community members, depending on your library sector.
- **Interesting plot:** What is happening, and why does it matter? Most good plots involve some tension, like a challenge or obstacle, and show the characters navigating that tension and achieving resolution or a path forward.
- **Strong visuals:** Include high-quality photos or video where possible. Visuals help bring your story to life and increase the likelihood of media uptake.

Who's Your Audience?

Consider who you want to reach and tailor your media release accordingly. Do you want parents to understand the role of the library in post-secondary readiness? Raise awareness about a copyright issue impacting academic libraries? Your audience will influence both your messaging and where you distribute your release.

Where Should You Send It?

Identify media outlets that align with your audience and goals. This might include local newspapers, community radio, education or health publications, or sector-specific outlets.

Many organizations publish staff directories (mastheads) on their websites. Look for reporters, editors, or producers who cover relevant topics. While some outlets accept general submissions, targeting a specific contact can improve your chances of coverage.

Sharing Your Media Release

Distribute your media release via email to your selected media contacts. You can paste the release directly into the email or attach it as a document. Keep your email brief and professional, clearly indicating why the information is relevant to their audience.

You can also amplify your release by sharing it through your library's website, social media channels, and partner networks to extend its reach beyond traditional media.

TEMPLATE: [Download the Media Release Template](#) →

Internal Communications

Not all advocacy happens publicly. For many libraries, particularly in academic, health, and special library settings, some of the most important advocacy takes place within the institution itself.

Internal communications focus on ensuring that library value is clearly understood by leadership within your organization.

This can include:

- Presenting usage data, outcomes, and impact reports to leadership or governing bodies
- Sharing brief updates that connect library services to institutional priorities
- Contributing to strategic planning or program review processes
- Highlighting user stories or service impacts in meetings or newsletters
- Providing evidence to support budgeting, staffing, or service decisions

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Setting Goals and Measuring Impact

Setting clear goals at the beginning of an advocacy effort can help focus your work and guide decision-making throughout a campaign. Your goals may focus on:

- Securing specific outcomes (e.g., increased funding, staffing or resources)
- Raising awareness and building understanding about the library and its work
- Strengthening relationships and building trust with stakeholders
- Increasing the visibility, credibility, and recognition of the library
- Encouraging action or support around issues important to your library and community (e.g., intellectual freedom)

Advocacy Planning Checklist

- ☑ Write down your advocacy goals and objectives at the outset
- ☑ Identify the activities and actions that will help you achieve those goals
- ☑ Determine who you need to involve, engage, or communicate with
- ☑ Use your goals and planned activities to guide and focus your advocacy efforts

Along with setting goals and planning your advocacy campaign, it is also important to **track advocacy outputs** such as meetings, events, media coverage, social media engagement, research activities, and outreach efforts. Monitoring these activities can help you assess what strategies are most effective and where best to focus your time, energy, and resources.

Leveraging Canadian Library Month

In Canada and Ontario, libraries can also take advantage of Canadian Library Month in October to celebrate and raise the profiles of their libraries. The month also includes a range of related celebrations and themed weeks that offer additional opportunities to highlight different aspects of library services, programs, and impact.

- First Nation Public Library Week – first week of October
- Ontario Public Library Week – third week of October (unless Thanksgiving occurs during that week, in which case it is moved to the following week)
- Canadian School Library Day – fourth Monday of October
- National Medical Librarians Month – October

The OLA is the provincial coordinator for Ontario Public Library Week. As the coordinator, OLA provides public libraries and public library supporters with various promotional resources for the week, including graphics.

Engaging Your Community During Canadian Library Month

Canadian Library Month is an ideal opportunity to celebrate your library's impact with your community.

- **Showcase how your library supports learning, creativity, and community connection.** This is an excellent time to launch a social media campaign that highlights the impact of your library's work. Profile your staff, take a walk down memory lane by sharing photos of how your library has evolved over the years, and tap into online trends to raise awareness and attract new followers.
- **Host special events, programs, or initiatives to commemorate the month:**
 - Host a [Dear School Library](#) event in your school library.
 - Run a library card drive campaign, offering incentives for new community members to register for a library card.
 - Invite your campus community to a "coffee and chat" gathering in the library.
 - Consider waiving library fines for the month to encourage re-engagement with library services.
 - Host a bookmark design or art competition to engage students and patrons creatively.
 - Organize special author talks, open houses, and activities featuring local entertainment.
 - Invite staff and users to your hospital library for giveaways and engagement activities.
 - Partner with local organizations, such as your Business Improvement Area (BIA), to extend reach.

Canadian Library Month also provides a timely opportunity to connect with elected officials. These moments of engagement can help build relationships and strengthen ongoing advocacy efforts.

Engaging Political Representatives During Canadian Library Month

- **Host a 'Library Day' and invite local representatives to visit your library, attend an event, or take part in a tour.** Use this opportunity to show your work in action. Highlight programs, introduce them to staff and users, and share real examples of how the library supports community priorities such as literacy, economic development, and inclusion.
- **Keep your messaging clear and focused.** Share a few key points about your library's impact, supported by stories and local data. Be prepared to connect your work to issues that matter to them and their constituents.
- If appropriate, **use this opportunity to introduce or reinforce a specific ask**, such as funding for a program or capital project. Even if no immediate decision is required, these conversations help build awareness and position the library as a trusted and essential community partner.
- **Follow up after the interaction** to thank them for their time, share additional information if needed, and maintain the connection beyond Canadian Library Month.

GUIDE: [Download How to Host a Library Day During OPLW](#) →

Learn More About Library Celebrations

[Canadian Library Month \(CLM\)](#)

[National Medical Librarians Month](#)

[First Nation Public Library Week \(FNPLW\)](#)

[Ontario Public Library Week \(OPLW\)](#)

[Canadian School Library Day \(CSLD\) / Journée nationale des bibliothèques scolaires](#)

[Canadian Library Workers' Day](#)

Intellectual Freedom and Responding to Censorship

Libraries play a critical role in upholding intellectual freedom and ensuring equitable access to information. In recent years, Canadian libraries have seen a [rising increase in book challenges](#) and [censorship demands](#). In moments where challenges or censorship concerns arise, it is essential that library staff communicate from a shared foundation of values and principles.

Consistent Messaging Through Policy and Training

Clear, consistent messaging is essential when responding to issues related to intellectual freedom and censorship. When library values are embedded in both policy and practice, staff are better equipped to communicate confidently and respond in a unified way.

Training plays a key role in strengthening this consistency. Training opportunities, such as the [Intellectual Freedom Course for Public Library Staff](#) by Centre for Free Expression (CFE) and Edmonton Public Library, should include all library staff. This ensures that everyone, regardless of role, shares a common understanding of library values and response approaches.

Strong policy and procedures are essential when a library is faced with a book challenge or demand for censorship. They provide a consistent, transparent framework for responding to concerns while ensuring that decisions are guided by established principles rather than individual discretion. Well-developed policies outline:

- the steps for review
- the roles and responsibilities of staff, and
- the criteria used to assess challenged materials

This structure helps ensure that all concerns are handled fairly, respectfully, and in alignment with the professional standards of librarianship.

Need help developing a policy or a procedure for responding to a challenge? The following resources provide sample policies, templates, and examples that you can adapt for your own context:

- [Canadian Library Policies Database](#) (Centre for Free Expression)
- [The Canadian Library Challenges Database](#) (Centre for Free Expression)
- [A Guide to the Selection and Deselection of School Library Resources](#) (Ontario School Library Association)
- [Collection Diversity Toolkit](#) (Canadian School Libraries)
- [Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries](#) (American Library Association)

Maintaining Momentum in Your Advocacy Work

Advocacy can take significant time, energy, and persistence, and setbacks are inevitable. It can be discouraging when the impact of your efforts isn't immediately visible, especially in the face of ongoing funding pressures and emerging challenges.

Sustaining your advocacy over the long term depends on the strength of your relationships. Stay connected with colleagues, community partners, and your broader library network. These connections can offer support, fresh ideas, and renewed motivation, helping you navigate challenges and continue your work with purpose.

It is important to remember that **advocacy is a long game**. The results of your efforts may take years to fully materialize, and progress often happens incrementally rather than all at once. Timing matters, as does the ability to pivot as priorities and contexts shift. Obstacles will arise and focus areas may evolve, but keeping this perspective can help you stay adaptable, persistent, and grounded in the long-term nature of the work.

How to Respond When Values Are Challenged

At times, you may encounter challenges to core library values such as intellectual freedom, equitable access, or inclusion. These situations can be complex and, at times, emotionally charged.

- **Ground your response in your library's policies, professional ethics, and established procedures.** Focus on clearly communicating the role of your library, its mission and values, and how your library's services, programs and collections serve its entire community.
- **Keep the conversation respectful** and focused on shared goals, such as learning, access, and community wellbeing.
- **You don't have to respond alone.** Consult with colleagues, leadership, or trusted peers to ensure your approach is consistent, informed, and aligned with your organization's values.

Dealing With Media Scrutiny

In times of controversy or heightened attention, media interest may increase. Preparation and clarity are key.

- Ensure that staff understand who is authorized to speak to the media and what internal processes should be followed.
- Develop clear, consistent messaging that aligns with your library's values and policies.
- When responding, keep your focus on facts, community impact, and the role of the library.

If you are not the designated spokesperson, it is appropriate to refer inquiries to the appropriate person within your organization. **Taking the time to coordinate a thoughtful response is far more effective than reacting quickly without alignment.**

Media attention can feel intense, but it also presents an opportunity to reinforce the value of libraries and the importance of your work in the community.

Protecting Staff Wellbeing

Advocacy work, particularly during difficult moments, can take a personal toll. **Prioritize staff wellbeing by creating space for debriefing, reflection, and mutual support.**

Encourage clear boundaries around work and communication, especially during high-pressure situations. Ensure staff know when to refer issues to others within the organization, rather than feeling they need to handle everything themselves. A supportive workplace culture is essential to sustaining advocacy over time.

Dealing with online harassment? Check out [PEN America's Online Harassment Field Manual](#) for practical strategies on how to protect yourself and others.

When to Escalate to OLA

Some issues may extend beyond your individual library or require broader sector support. Consider reaching out to the OLA when:

- An issue has potential province-wide implications
- You are facing coordinated challenges (e.g., censorship efforts, policy pressures)
- You need guidance, resources, or a unified sector response
- Media attention or public scrutiny is escalating beyond your organization's capacity

OLA can provide support, amplify key messages, and help connect you with others facing similar challenges. Escalation is not a sign of failure; it's a strategic step in collective advocacy.

Advocacy Checklist: 10 Actions You Can Take

If you do nothing else, do this:

- ☒ Build one relationship with a decision-maker
- ☒ Know your library's top 3 impact stats
- ☒ Create your 30-second elevator pitch
- ☒ Share one impact story per week
- ☒ Align your message with local priorities
- ☒ Use social media intentionally
- ☒ Invite a leader into your library space
- ☒ Collaborate across sectors
- ☒ Stay non-partisan and solutions-focus
- ☒ Stay connected to OLA

BACKGROUND: HOW LIBRARIES ARE FUNDED

School Libraries

- Municipal Jurisdiction: School Trustees (elected)²
- Provincial Jurisdiction: Ministry of Education

The Ontario Ministry of Education administers the publicly funded elementary and secondary education system in Ontario through the Core Education Funding (CEF) model. School boards receive funding primarily through provincial grants, which are informed by a range of factors such as student enrolment, demographics, and local needs. While education funding was historically supplemented by local property taxes, the province now plays the central role in determining overall funding allocations.

Under the current CEF model, funding is no longer allocated using specific staffing benchmarks for teacher-librarians. Instead, funding is provided to school boards in broader categories, offering flexibility in how resources are distributed at the local level. This means that decisions about staffing, including teacher-librarians and library programming, are made by school boards based on their priorities.

As a result, there is no longer protected or dedicated funding for school libraries within the provincial model, and boards are not required to report specifically on library spending. This increased flexibility places greater responsibility on school boards and senior administration to prioritize and support school library programs within their overall budget decisions.

To learn more and support advocacy efforts, visit the [Save Our School Libraries](#) campaign.

Public Libraries

- Municipal: Public Library Board Directors (appointed and includes some municipal councillors who are elected)
- Provincial: Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming administers the Public Libraries Act and statutory grants under the Act, as well as developing provincial policies for public libraries. Municipal

Councils are responsible for appointing public library boards, and provide most of the funding for libraries (municipal tax dollars).

A funding formula consists of a mix of provincial and municipal funding based on population sizes.

Municipal Councils are responsible for determining the composition of library boards and for appointing library board trustees immediately following municipal elections and when vacancies occur. Municipal Council can appoint its own members to the public library board, up to one less than 50% of the total number of library board members. The majority of a library board must be comprised of citizens appointed from the community.

² In the current legislative context, the Ministry of Education has expanded its authority to intervene in school board governance, including [placing boards under supervision](#) or otherwise [limiting the role of trustees](#). As a result, decision-making authority may rest with a provincially appointed supervisor, and trustees may no longer be accessible or appropriate contacts for advocacy at the local level. If this is the case, school library professionals may choose to engage with stakeholders beyond school board trustees, including those at the provincial-level (e.g., appointed supervisor).

First Nation Public Libraries

- Band Councils
- Provincial: Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming
- Federal: Education funds

The traditional source of tax revenue for municipal public libraries does not exist for public libraries in First Nation communities.

Instead, provincial funding for these libraries is administered by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming through the Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG) and the First Nation Salary Supplement Grant (FNSS). In recent years, the Province has committed new and enhanced investments—including an [additional \\$1.25 million annually](#)—to help stabilize and strengthen FNPLs. These funds provide on average \$35,000/year to each of these existing libraries.

Federal funding for First Nations libraries is typically drawn from broader on-reserve education allocations, which have historically been lower than off-reserve funding levels. As a result, there are limited resources available to establish and sustain library services. Band Councils and local leadership therefore play a critical role in supporting operations, often covering essential costs such as facilities, utilities, connectivity, and other core services.

Academic Libraries

- Provincial: Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security

The Minister of Education and the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security (MCURES) are responsible for the administration of laws relating to education and skills training. MCURES is responsible for distributing funds allocated by the provincial legislature to colleges and universities. Colleges and universities are also fee-based. The funding of academic libraries is at the discretion of the academic institution.

Health Libraries

- Provincial: Ministry of Health

Most health libraries in Ontario are embedded within hospitals, public health units, research institutes, or academic institutions, and do not receive dedicated provincial library funding. Instead, they are funded through the operating budgets of their parent organizations, primarily hospitals and health agencies, which are themselves funded by the province through the Ministry of Health. As a result, health library funding is often discretionary and tied to broader institutional priorities. In some cases, shared service models—such as partnerships coordinated through Public Health Ontario—help extend access to library services across multiple organizations, improving cost-efficiency and access to evidence-based resources.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

We have compiled some resources to get you started. Let us know what other tools, resources or research you would recommend by emailing lkwok@accessola.com

Advocacy

McDowell, K. (2025). [*Critical data storytelling for libraries: Crafting ethical narratives for advocacy and impact*](#). ALA Neal-Schuman.

Coffman, J., & Beer, T. (2015). [*The advocacy strategy framework*](#). Center for Evaluation Innovation.

Daly, J. A. (2011). [*Advocacy: Championing ideas and influencing others*](#). Yale University Press.

[Library Advocacy Now!](#) (2011), Canadian Association of Public Libraries (CAPL)

[Public Library Advocacy Resources](#) (2026), Ontario Library Association (OLA)

[School Library Advocacy Resources](#) (2026), Ontario Library Association (OLA)

[Sample Policy – Board Advocacy – Policy Number: GOV: 07](#) (2023), Ontario Library Service (OLS)

[Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit \(VOLT\)](#), Ontario Library Service (OLS)

[Ready, Set, Advocate: Library Advocacy Toolkit](#) (2021), Illinois Library Association (ILA)

[Influence](#) (2012), by Robert Cialdini

[Principles of Persuasion](#) (2006), by Robert Cialdini

Digital Advocacy

Rosen, B. (2024). [*The five building blocks of a digital advocacy campaign \(Part 1\)*](#). Media Cause.

Milroy, J. (2016). [*Digital organizing 101: What is a ladder of engagement and why do I need one?*](#) Medium.

Schossow, C. (2014). [*Using the ladder of engagement: Turning casual supporters into fierce advocates*](#). New Media Campaign.

Library Celebrations

[Canadian School Library Day / Journée nationale des bibliothèques scolaires](#)

[Canadian Library Month](#)

[Canadian Library Workers' Day](#)

[First Nations Public Libraries Week \(FNPLW\)](#)

[National Medical Librarians Month](#)

[Ontario Public Library Week \(OPLW\)](#)

Library Campaigns

[Save Canada's Interlibrary Loans](#) (2026), Ontario Library Association (OLA)

[Dear School Library](#) (2025), Ontario Library Association (OLA)

[Save Our School Libraries](#) (2024), Ontario Library Association (OLA)

[I Love Libraries](#), American Library Association (ALA)

Public Library Impact Research

[The Impact of Canadian Public Libraries: Social Impact Study](#) (2026), Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC)

[Impact of Technology Services in Ontario Public Libraries Reports](#), Library Impact Ontario / Toronto Public Library

[OVERDUE: The Case for Canada's Public Libraries](#) (2023), Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) and Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC)

[Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives \(CCPA\) articles on libraries](#)

Aragão, C. (2024). [*Much more than books: The case for robust funding for the Toronto Public Library*](#). Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Public Library Impact: Reports, Studies, and Examples

[Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit \(VOLT\): Testimonials and Samples](#), Ontario Library Service (OLS)

[Caledon Public Library Social Return on Investment Report](#) (2025)

[Vaughan Public Library Annual Report](#) (2025)

[Burlington Public Library Annual Report](#) (2024)

[Kawartha Lakes Public Library VOLT Report](#) (2024)

[Toronto Public Library Social Impact Study](#) (2023)

[The Economic and Social Value of London Public Library](#) (2023)

[Woodstock Public Library Economic Impact Study](#) (2018)

[Vaughan Public Library Economic Impact Study](#) (2017)

[Milton Public Library Economic Impact Study](#) (2017)

[Ottawa Public Library Economic Impact Study](#) (2016)

[Vancouver Island Regional Library Economic Impact Study](#) (2016)

[Sault Ste. Marie Public Library Economic Impact Study](#) (2015)

[Stratford Public Library Economic Impact Study](#) (2015)

School Library Impact Research

[Ontario School Library Impact Project \(OSLIP\) Research Report: Information Literacy from High School to University](#) (2021), Ontario Library Association (OLA)

Ewbank, A. D. (2019). [Political advocacy for school librarians: Leveraging your influence](#). Libraries Unlimited

[Advocacy and the 21st Century School Librarian: Challenges and Best Practices](#) (2017), EBSCO

Barker, K. (2017). [Creating a Unique Brand for Your School Library: Values, Vision, Voice, and Visuals: Increasing your library's visibility as a form of advocacy](#). *Young Adult Library Services*, 15(3), 31-35.

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[Canadian Health Libraries Association \(CHLA\) Resources](#)

[CHLA Measuring Impact Tools](#)

Government Documents and Information Sources

Understanding government priorities, values, and emerging initiatives is an important part of effective advocacy. A wide range of public documents can help you stay informed about planned projects and investments, as well as areas of policy focus across all levels of government.

At the federal and provincial levels, useful sources include:

- Throne Speech
- Budget documents
- Fall Economic Statement
- Expenditure Estimates
- Public Accounts
- Hansard (official transcripts of legislative debates)
- Committee transcripts

At the municipal level, useful sources include:

- Council meeting minutes
- Budget documents

For all levels of government, additional sources include:

- Campaign literature
- Public opinion polls
- Press releases
- News media

TIP

Subscribe to [Ontario Newsroom](#) to receive news from the Ontario government.