

Trustee Essentials

Chapter 13 Library Advocacy

Advocacy

- One of your major responsibilities as a public library trustee is to act as an advocate for the library.
- Your primary function as a library advocate will be to provide clear, accurate, and timely information on library issues to people who need it in order to make sound decisions on those issues.
- Libraries need their trustees to act as advocates for several reasons. Pressures on local, county, and state budgets makes it harder than ever for libraries to obtain adequate funding.

Advocacy

- Because public libraries have a unique place in local government, their needs may not be as readily understood by government officials as those of other units of government, and a greater effort is needed to tell the library story.

Establish Priorities

- Early each year, the library board acting as a whole should decide which of its goals or positions to advocate most strenuously.
- Your goal as an advocate is to shape the local decision-making process, which requires an understanding of how decisions are made in the community and who must be influenced in order to achieve favorable outcomes.

Ways to Act as an Advocate

- speaking to civic groups about library needs and issues
- talking to friends about the library, its role in the community, and its needs.
- writing letters to the editor of the local newspaper.
- testifying at local and state budget hearings.
- talking and writing to state and federal legislators about the needs of the library.
- contributing to a library newsletter that is sent to decision-makers

Discussion Questions

- How is library advocacy different from other basic trustee duties?
- What are some issues being faced by your library on which library board members can exercise influence through advocacy?
- How does the advocacy role of an individual board member differ from the role of the board as whole?