

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
**A COMMUNICATIONS
HANDBOOK FOR
LIBRARIES**



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I. Introductory Letter to Libraries

Summer 2004

Dear American Library Association member,

It's quite a time for libraries! From the challenges of the PATRIOT Act to the ever-daunting budget cuts, it's a changing world. So how can you get the word out to media and advocates alike in a results-oriented, cost-effective manner?

When it comes to communications, in many ways the library community—public library professionals and staff, school librarians, library researchers, curators of special collections, trustees, systems librarians, and Friends of libraries—has a head start.

All you need is at your fingertips. You have the technology and the skills to keep you in instant and constant touch. Remember, public relations is a versatile tool. What's more, you're well-organized and have the good will of everyone who has gained a lifelong love of learning.

Communications and public relations are in essence the art of influence. In fact, non-profit public relations may have started in 1855 when the American Medical Association passed a resolution that it would cooperate with the media.

With the relations we have developed with media—and therefore the public—over time, we have gained the ability to help shape public opinion in our communities through such efforts as National Library Week or Teen Read Week. We have worked steadily using daily outreach and efforts to build relationships with professionals in our community to motivate our customers to use our unique library resources throughout their lives.

This guide is designed to help you determine if your story is newsworthy or noteworthy—and to help you to try to get media visibility for your events and programs without breaking the bank or taking up too much valuable staff time. Building on the ALA's *Library Advocates Handbook*, this communications tutorial will take you through public relations basics of outlets and media advisories to navigating through tough TV interviews.

In addition to this guide, you may find additional resources at the ALA Public Information Office's Web site (www.ala.org/pio). There you will find press releases, sample PSAs, national fact sheets, props for press conferences, soundbites, and more. Be sure to check out "The Campaign for America's Libraries" Web site (www.ala.org/@yourlibrary), which contains valuable information for the day-to-day promotion of and advocacy for your library.

We hope the skills, tools, and confidence you gain from this manual and through staying in touch will give you what you need to give the media and others your message. And remember: everything you need for a strong, effective communications strategy is available @ your library®.

Sincerely,

Patricia Glass-Schuman
Chair, Public Awareness Committee 2004
Former ALA president

Mark R. Gould
Director, Public Information Office

II. What Can Media Attention/Publicity Do for Your Library?

Publicity is designed to attract attention, create interest and gain support. The key to effective communications outreach is developing an organized approach. Like other functions your library or school performs, good publicity depends on getting a clear sense of who your audience is, what your goals are—and what media attention can and cannot do.

Media Attention/Publicity Can:

- increase public awareness of your programs, personnel, and services;
- increase involvement of public and private partners;
- create, change, build, or enhance the public image of your library;
- encourage contributions of money, materials, services, and time;
- win support for city, state, federal, foundation, or individual donor funding of your library;
- help you to reach new or never before approached audiences, such as non-English speakers;
- clarify misunderstandings about what libraries do and how they're financed;
- mobilize opinion leaders in your community to become active supporters and advocates of your efforts; and
- help knit together a vital network of libraries throughout the region, state, and nationwide and help build public and private support for libraries.

Media Attention/Publicity Can't:

- guarantee exclusively positive coverage;
- substitute for quality projects at your library;
- compensate for poor service delivery;
- eliminate the need for strategic planning within your library or within the your library system; or
- replace effective lobbying.

III. Developing a Targeted/Simple Media/Communications Plan

Before you begin to contact the media or your constituents, draft a simple but thorough communications plan by following the guidelines below. This should be approximately one to two pages in length and should take into account your goals, messaging, audiences, tactics, existing resources, timing, evaluation, and budget. It's also important to think about whether or not your program, activity, event, or topic is newsworthy and if it will fit into the news cycle. All of these topics will be discussed in more detail in this section.

Determine Your Goals and Objectives

Why do you want to do media or advocacy outreach? Your goals may be specific, such as:

1. making current and potential library users aware of the services offered @ your library®; or
2. letting the public know about a specific upcoming event, report release, or activity.

Or, they may be quite broad, such as:

1. increasing your base of potential donors; or
2. increasing public awareness and support for your library.

You only need to define two or three goals for a simple campaign, and you can use the list of what publicity can do as a guide (Section II).

Defining Your Target Audience/Who Is Your Audience?

When planning media outreach at first the impulse is to focus on the story. Resist. Instead, begin by considering your audience.

The easy answer to the question “who are you trying to reach?” is “the public.” In fact, there is not one public, but many different groups of people who get their information from a variety of sources. Your first task as a publicist for your library is to begin to identify those “publics,” find out where they get their information, and to set your goals for when you reach them. Talk to the group you're targeting to find out what outlets they read, how the messages you've defined work for them, and what their priorities are. Your “publics” may include:

- your library leadership—board members, staff, volunteers;
- current and potential contributors;
- opinion leaders in your community;
- potential library members and leaders;
- public officials;
- your colleagues in other local and statewide associations;
- your counterparts in other states;
- local and regional business leaders;
- potential library users;
- seniors, teens, parents of young children;
- journalists;
- your neighbors; and
- ethnic communities.

Shaping the Key Message

Regardless of your goal(s), your message(s) should always be simple and consistent. You may already have three or four key messages for your library, or you may develop messages for individual

campaigns. If you already have key messages you may want to review and select one or two of these to use on a new campaign. Your key message should always be applicable to your library's primary mission (for example, libraries are a community center, libraries are a source of learning) and then should be appropriate for particular events that are hosting or programs you are sponsoring. Come up with your key messages and develop talking points that support these messages.

Craft your messages so they can be used to reach all or most of your audiences selected above. If they are internal audiences, such as library Friends, they should be proud of the message and know what it means. Ideally, they should be able to communicate your library's key message in one or two sentences or talking points.

Your message(s)—boiled down to a tagline—might represent a core value of your library (“A book a day keeps the doctor away” or “Our children need our library”) or be a call to action (“Get involved—get a library card!”). It might also incorporate The Campaign for America’s Libraries messages that include the phrase “@ your library®.”

Following are the three main Campaign for America’s Libraries messages (and talking points):

- **Libraries are changing and dynamic places.** Librarians are techno-savvy, at the forefront of the information age, and help people of all ages find the information they need, when they need it.
- **Libraries are places of opportunity.** Libraries are part of the American dream, a place for education, self-help, and lifelong learning.
- **Libraries bring you the world.** Where else can you have access to nearly everything in print or online and even have the personal assistance of a librarian to help you find what you are looking for?

REMEMBER: You, the librarian reading this guide and/or some of your colleagues, may not be your target audience, nor may you “get” your messages depending on your activity or project. For example, your reference librarian may not know exactly how or with what to reach potential library users, but may know exactly how to reach those that use the library daily. If new users are your target audience, you’ll have to test your messages with people who represent that audience. This does not always mean running formal focus groups, as this can be an expensive undertaking. Consider testing messages on your child’s group of friends or their parents or people who attend your gym or religious group, or ask one of your relatives to test your messages with people they know.

You may also find the “Shaping the Message Worksheet” on page 31 of the ALA’s *Library Advocates Handbook* helpful when developing your message. And check out the @ your library® campaign Web site at www.ala.org/@yourlibrary.

Designing and Outlining Your Tactics: What Will Best Fit Your Library?

Use this guide to pick and choose elements for your campaign that will help you develop a plan of action that is closely related to your goals, audience, and timeline as well as the financial, staff, and volunteer resources you have to fulfill your chosen tactics. You’ll see that many of the communications tactics discussed incorporate advocacy activities as these are more important than ever in effectively reaching and engendering support for your library activities and issues.

Pointers to Defining Tactics

1. USING YOUR AUDIENCE LIST: The first step is to refer to the key audiences you’ve already identified and determine the tactics you can use to best reach them. Targeting your efforts toward these audiences will be more effective and efficient than throwing your message out there and hoping it hits the right ears.

Consider where each audience group gets its information. For example, housewives often don’t hear drive-time radio. Business people rarely catch daytime TV talk shows. Legislators and

their staffs read both their hometown opinion pages and state or national dailies and weeklies. Local weeklies may have small circulations, but their clips often end up on legislators' desks.

2. CONSIDERING TIMING WHEN PLANNING YOUR RELEASE, EVENT, OR PROGRAM. Timing your news delivery is key to your success. Think about the best/worst time to release information or a report—or do an event or activity. Consider the news cycle. Here are some examples:

- **LONG-TERM PLANNED EVENTS OR ACTIVITIES.** If you are planning an event or activity that you would like to invite press to attend and cover, consider scheduling when there won't likely be competing events. This is easier said than done. Remember that since your date will be set well in advance, even if media is interested in attending breaking news may change their plans. Keep this in mind in your planning so that you, your team, and your volunteers are not disappointed.

Timing can also help *strengthen* a news or feature hook. Try to consider other happenings locally, statewide, or nationally when planning your date. For example: Consider releasing a new report during National Library Week, Banned Books Week, School Library Media Month, Library Card Sign-Up Month, or Teen Read Week if your event has a related theme. Also, holidays such as National Library Worker's Day, Labor Day, Mother's Day, Women's History Month, or others also provide opportunities for media outreach campaigns.

- **DAYS OF THE WEEK.** Your town or city may have better days when reporters and producers are likely to attend your event if there is no breaking news. In many big cities, the best times for media events is Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays between 9 A.M. and noon. This gives you time to get your spokespeople onto early morning shows before your event and will give the evening news shows time to attend and then get back to the station to edit their news segments. Figuring out your news cycle can help you plan this.
- **TACTICS.** Advocacy and media activities can be designed and planned to overlap or can be planned independently. There are three primary types of tactics for reaching out to target audiences:

- outreach to your community through events;
- personal contact with volunteers, legislators and/or decision-makers; and
- approaching media directly to reach targeted audiences and/or the public.

A few pointers as you think about selecting your tactics:

- A public service announcement on a radio might reach your audience better than a direct mail piece.
- If you decide to do outreach through television news, remember that you will need to have trained spokespeople ready to be interviewed on camera.
- If you are promoting an event whose potential attendees will be high school students, then it would not make sense to buy an ad in a local paper where the average reader is considerably older.
- If you are looking to reach the Hispanic families in your community, go to the Spanish-speaking media outlets or community centers with your Hispanic spokespeople.

See Section IV for descriptions of types of events, media tactics, and strategies.

Outreach to Community

This outreach can include events such as a town hall or fundraiser, a pep rally, or a workshop. It can include simple written correspondence, such as a postcard, or more detailed pleas for involvement, such as a volunteer or fundraising letter. Once you've determined your end product, you may want to distribute your materials in various forms and to different audiences. Some of these materials can be produced for a very small budget. This is especially true if you your board members and advocates reach out to the community for free services or printing. They want to help and may be chomping at the bit to do their part to encourage library support.

- **GET IN TOUCH WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS.** These groups might include the local Parent-Teacher Association, a Rotary Club, religious organizations, or school boards. Speaking

engagements, library tours, or exhibits can be an effective way of reaching key audiences who share particular interests or concerns. You can also create a one-time or ongoing partnership with a community group. For example, if your audience is children and/or teachers, you can try to arrange for one of your library representatives to visit your local schools to talk about the benefits, programs, and activities of your library. This will give you access to teachers, students, and, by extension, their parents. It will also put a face on their library—and a personal connection.

- **PERSONAL CONTACT.** To reach opinion leaders, elected officials, and their staff, personal, one-on-one contact is always more effective than a letter or a brochure; however you may decide to send a letter as your first introduction. Once you become familiar with their offices, you may find that phone calls are appropriate and more effective than e-mail. Keep track of their preferences. After you've made that first contact, you may try to follow up with a phone call or visit. When you DO speak or meet, let your elected official know how many of his or her constituents support and use your library. In any case, when you do write or speak to your legislator, do so from the heart. Avoid clichés and try to be brief.
- **APPROACHING MEDIA.** Section IV is entirely devoted to approaching the media.

Creating Materials

Whatever your strategy and timing, you will need to consider creating new or revising existing materials to send to interested groups and/or media. Different types of written materials are covered in depth in the Written Word section, but two rules of thumb are:

- **USE THE FACTS.** If you are waging an awareness campaign, prepare a brief but informational “fact sheet” that supports your position. Statistics may be especially helpful. Perhaps supporting the local ballot initiative would just cost the average property owner the equivalent of a Happy Meal or two movie tickets a year. These facts will persuade the voters more than the mantra “your library is important” or “save your library.” And, the fact sheet will dispel myths or inaccuracies that your opposition may spread.

Feel free to distribute fact sheets to each of your supporters. They can become informal spokespersons for your library and help you spread your good messages. A Quotable Facts about Libraries brochure is also available for your use: www.ala.org/ala/pio/availablepiomat/quotablefact.pdf. So is a version translated into Spanish: www.ala.org/ala/pio/availablepiomat/spanishquotablefacts.pdf

- **CONSIDER “IMAGE.”** It is important that any materials you create are specific to your library and consistent with the character of both your library and your community. For example, if your library has a limited budget, don't try to impress your patrons with a glossy, four-color brochure. Or, if a significant portion of your library's users speaks another language, try to provide a translated version of your materials.

How Much Time Do You Have? How to Devise an Internal Planning Calendar

Regardless of how much time you have to deliver your message, to accomplish your stated goals, consider developing a calendar to help you stay organized.

To begin, start with the event or release date and work backwards, figuring out how much time you need to give yourself for each task. In this section, the focus is on approaching the media. You will also need to develop an internal calendar for the event itself.

Some of the items that may be included are broadcast and print outlet deadlines, as they work on various deadlines and timelines. For example, monthly magazines have a longer lead time than daily papers and broadcast outlets.

Your timeline several months out might begin by specifying what needs to be accomplished in a particular week, but as it gets closer to your event or activity, the timing might be down to the hour. Try to be specific in listing tasks to be completed to help staff plan their time so that you have enough

time to make phone calls and write releases or other items. Also, remember that the actual event or release isn't the last thing on your calendar! Follow up during the days and week after the event, to gather news clips and thank reporters.

Sample Planning Calendar for a Press Briefing

This is a sample calendar to be adapted for your use based on your media outlets and deadlines.

- Several months before an event—or for an intern project to find general information:
 - Check with as many outlets as possible to find out their deadlines for listings, public service announcements, articles if you're trying to get word into a special edition, etc.
 - Assess goals and audience.
 - Brainstorm media strategy for event.
 - Write and revise plan.
 - Contact event site to reserve date. (Should be done earlier, if possible or if not on-site.)
 - Begin to contact participants and speakers
- Five weeks before event:
 - Receive commitment from speakers.
 - Draft Media Advisory.
- Four weeks before event:
 - Write/mail calendar listing to papers and PSA to radio/TV.
 - Begin to shape speaker remarks.
 - Plan and produce press kit components.
- Three weeks before event
 - Finalize speakers remarks internally.
 - Edit press kit components.
- Two weeks before event:
 - Update media list with recent changes.
 - Begin to distribute remarks to speakers for editing.
 - Write/mail release #1 to weeklies (announce the event).
 - Begin to contact talk-show producers to set up interviews.
 - Send advisories out.
- One week before event:

Remember, weekly papers are published on a earlier deadline than dailies. You may need to do outreach to them this week.

 - Write/mail release #2 to weeklies (announce speakers).
 - Send release #1 to dailies and electronics.
 - Media follow-up calls.
 - Call speakers to confirm appearance and finalize remarks.
 - Finalize press kit components.
- Week of event:

Weekly papers published.

 - Phone conference reminders.
 - Set-up feature stories and interviews.
 - Coordinate coverage.
 - Distribute release #2 to dailies.
 - Copy, collate, and assemble press kit.
- Day before event:
 - Call to remind assignment editors.
- Day and week after event:
 - Monitor news coverage.
 - Write/mail follow-up release.
 - Thank you notes and calls for good stories.
 - Send letters-to-editors to correct errors and expand coverage.
 - Debrief.

Using Existing Resources: How a Limited Budget Can Be a Help, Not a Hindrance

Your biggest resource is your library users. Children can be effective media spokespeople; parents know the value of the library to them and to their children. Seniors often rely on the library for reading materials or Internet access and use it as a community center. The tips below may help you to maximize your resources:

- **TRY TO GET TO KNOW YOUR LIBRARY USERS.** For example, if there is an unemployed person who comes to use the Internet at the library to find a job, take note of that, as he or she may be able to provide a moving testimonial in the future. Noticing all of the different reasons that people come to the library will broaden your base of support and reinforce the necessity of your library for the members of your community. It will also highlight important, concrete stories you can tell to the media, funders, elected officials, and opinion leaders. Keeping a file of these individuals can prove invaluable.
- **TAKE SPECIAL NOTE OF OPINION LEADERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY WHO USE YOUR LIBRARY.** Perhaps the president of a local PTA is a frequent user. Or maybe one of the members of your Board of Trustees is also on the Board of Directors at the local YMCA. This person is likely to have a large network of contacts that he or she can influence to support the library, either through giving time, money, or simply writing a letter to an elected official. Making use of these supporters and potential supporters is inexpensive and it is the most effective way to reach your other target audiences.
- **DON'T FORGET YOUR LIBRARY TRUSTEES AND FRIENDS.** Library trustees generally have political and community connections that can benefit the library, and Friends of the library are valuable not only as voices, but also as eyes and ears for library staff. Take time in your trustee meetings to discuss these connections in relationship to specific events or advocacy activities—and encourage your trustees to act on them. Discussing their commitments in front of peers can be an effective way to hold them to their promises.
- **ASK "VOLUNTEERS" HOW BEST TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THEM,** for example, via e-mail or telephone. Remember to keep your volunteers informed about important events, issues they should know about, and/or how they can help; you want these people to be as "in the know" as possible to enable them to maintain their connection to the library and spread accurate information.

Making the most of the resources at your fingertips often means that you or another staff member at your library must spend a significant amount of time talking to library users and identifying those that are best positioned to reach out to the community. However, cultivating these supporters will be worth the effort, and the network you build can be used for years to come.

Evaluating the Effectiveness Your Campaign

Remember to incorporate periodic evaluation into your planning from the very start. This can be done monthly, quarterly, prior to board meetings, or on your chosen schedule. Set this into your planning calendar. Evaluation can be focused on the number of placements you got or can be broader to encompass your overarching advocacy goals.

In the ALA's Library Advocates Handbook, the following chart of indicators was listed:

Key advocacy indicators might be:

- Has funding improved?
- Did the law pass?
- Did demand for a particular service increase?
- Did you receive editorial support?
- Does the library enjoy greater prestige?

- Did you get requests after items appeared in the media?
- What type of comments did you receive or hear?
- Did you build your advocacy network?

Here are a few ways to incorporate evaluation:

- In the day or two following an event, meet with staff that were involved to discuss objectively how you could do it better next time. Talk about the event or activity itself, your timeline, media outreach, etc. Remember to make this a constructive session, not one to point fingers. Once you've figured out how to do it better, implement these changes.
- Consider passing out an evaluation form to guests if appropriate at your event. Ask questions like:
 - How did you hear about the event?
 - How would you rate the event overall? (provide a scale for a response)
 - Will you consider joining us next year for a similar event?
 - What was your favorite part of the event?
 - Are there any suggestions you can make to help us improve next year's event?
- Keep a running tab of all of the media you reached out to and the placements you achieved. Create a chart to record them. In the chart consider listing them by type of outlet, such as radio, television, print, Internet, or wire services, then create a column for the date, the outlet, the name of the actual article or show and the reporter if notable, then, if available, the circulation or audience numbers. If this is an event or activity that is repeated yearly, compare how you did this year with last and use these items to create a plan for upcoming years.

IV. Moving Forward with Your Plan

The Results: Envisioning Your Media Hits

In order for you to finalize your strategy and implement your plan, you'll need to envision the media results you would like to see. There are different types of media and types of stories through which to reach your audience. The importance of following up after you have made an initial contact cannot be overstated. You may have to contact a journalist/editor/producer several times and remind him or her why you are calling each time. If you depend on your media contact to call or e-mail you back, you will have limited success. Don't be afraid to be persistent, but respect his or her wishes if the person you contact insists that he or she "doesn't cover that" or is "not the person to contact." In that case, feel free to ask him or her for a recommendation for who you might contact.

Outreach via the media will be easier if you become familiar with your local newspapers (dailies, weeklies, monthlies, etc.) and radio and television stations. When you read the paper, take note of the names of reporters who cover issues that might involve your library.

Following is a brief description of each medium:

Print

- **NEWS.** A report on something timely that just happened or will happen soon. This would include an expansion of your library or the receipt of a grant or large donation. Announcing an upcoming event is not as likely to be covered as a news story.
- **FEATURE STORIES.** Press tend to feature a particular person (an outstanding volunteer, for example) or issue (literacy) and are not necessarily driven by something that is timely. Feature stories are sometimes called "evergreen" because they can sit unpublished in the hopper for many moons.
- **LISTINGS.** You might ask a paper to list an upcoming event or help you get the word out if your library's hours change.
- **EDITORIALS.** These are opinion pieces written by one or more members of your newspaper's editorial board, and reflect the opinion of the publication. The editorial board is not related to the reporters of news.
- **ADS.** These are paid advertisements that you pay the newspaper to print. Some newspapers require camera-ready graphics. Others will do the layout for you.
- **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs).** Public service announcements are free ads made available to non-profits as a community service. The announcements are submitted by you and published by a newspaper free of charge. Community newspapers are ideal targets for print PSAs. So are radio stations (see below.) PSAs are intended to provide information, and are not appropriate for "calls to action." The campaign has print PSAs available online at www.ala.org/ala/pio/campaign/prtools/campaignPSAs.htm.
- **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.** These are short, time-sensitive letters anyone (although not anonymously) can write that the paper prints (sometimes edited) at its discretion. They may be a comment from your library director, your board chair, a volunteer, or a supporter in reaction to an article in the paper or even a political issue in your community. Your newspaper will have specific guidelines for submitting one. If you or another member of your staff submits one, be sure to identify your affiliation with the library.
- **OP-EDS.** Op-eds (standing for opposite the editorial page) provide a place in papers (and some magazines) for readers to express their views. To submit an op-ed, it is generally wise to call the editor of the op-ed or editorial page and explain your idea briefly as well as your affiliation with the library. Most op-eds are about 750 words, but you may want to ask about length as well. When submitting your op-ed, include a proposed headline. Don't be surprised if the headline changes or the editor makes minor edits to your piece.
- **PHOTO-OPS.** A photo-op (or photo opportunity) is any situation that would yield a good photo in the newspaper; for example, a special guest reading a story to a group of young children at

the library. If you identify a photo-op, call the photo desk at your newspaper. Be sure the name of your library is in the photo (even a homemade banner gets your message across) in case the photo caption writer eliminates it.

- NEWSLETTERS. Many libraries have publications they produce, such as annual reports, brochures, calendars, and newsletters for the staff and public. Don't forget to use these valuable publications to help spread the word about your library.

TV/Cable

- NEWS. Your local network news may be interested in covering an event at your library—but only if there is a visual element; for example, the delivery of twenty new computers with Internet access, or your mayor or governor reading to local children. If your library is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, let your local media know. However, this alone may not be compelling enough. You will need something visual—a banner, an interview from a library user who was there fifty years ago. With an added attraction, you probably will get the attention you want.
- FEATURE SPOTS. Watch your local news to find out about their daily or weekly features. Perhaps once a week, they feature a “neighbor” or a person who is “making a difference in the community.” Consider contacting the producer of that segment and ask them to feature one of your library's staff, a dedicated volunteer, or an intriguing patron.

Features also can include the darker side of library news. Perhaps the paint is peeling away on a wall in the children's reading room. A local anchor and his or her camera person may be interested in shooting footage and interviewing you about the problem. In most cases, you would not pitch this story to producers. They may come to you. Before cameras arrive, you need to figure out your message and what your spokesperson can say on camera to assure the community that the problem will be fixed.

- PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs). Most TV stations have community calendars and/or public service announcements they offer to nonprofits free of charge. Unlike paid ads, these service announcements are not guaranteed to run. However, they are free ways to reach larger audiences when you don't have an advertising budget. The Campaign for America's Libraries has PSAs available online at www.ala.org/ala/pio/campaign/prtools/campaignPSAs.htm.
- CABLE NEWS. Cable news stations are becoming less and less localized. However, your local channel may still have a venue that would be useful to you. Look at the program line-up—there might be a show such as “Meet the Leaders” or the like where the chair of your Board of Trustees could appear to deliver your message.
- VIDEO NEWS RELEASES. You may want to issue a press release in the form of a video. However, this is far more costly than a print release and only appropriate if you have strong visuals.
- COMMUNITY CALENDARS. Both local network news and local cable channels often offer community calendars. This is sometimes a portion of their news segment, but they often have Web sites that list community events, too. Follow the directions they give when listing your community event on the calendar. Be sure to take note of deadlines, formats, and criteria.

Radio

- NEWS. Know and listen to all your local stations. Radio news is becoming less and less local, but it may still be possible for you to get coverage about a local news story. Keep in mind the newscaster will usually have to tell your story in ten to fifteen seconds (around thirty to forty words) unless it's a feature.
- RADIO NEWS RELEASE (RNR). You may want to issue a press release as a taped message. However, this is more costly and time-consuming than a print release.
- PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs). Most radio stations offer public service announcements to nonprofits free of charge. The announcements are generally thirty seconds in length (about seventy-five words) but may be shorter. These service announcements are not guaranteed to run; and when they do run, it is generally not during peak listening time. However, they are free

ways to reach larger audiences when you don't have an advertising budget. Remember to submit PSAs to radios in ALL CAPS and double-spaced. If your library has a radio station as sponsor for an event or activity, they will definitely include your PSAs more frequently. The Campaign for America's Libraries has PSAs available online at www.ala.org/ala/pio/campaign/prtools/campaignPSAs.htm.

- **TALK RADIO.** There are local, regional, and national radio shows. These programs usually discuss issues, not events. Perhaps your library was active in opposing CIPA or fighting budget cuts. You or one of your library's representatives might ask to be a guest on a show to discuss this. Tailor your pitch to the particular venue. If the station's audience is just in your area, be specific about the effects or potential effects in your area alone.
- **COMMUNITY CALENDARS.** Your radio station may announce community events. Find out by calling the station. If they do, find out how often they make the announcements (many stations only do it once a week), the deadline, and in what format they prefer to receive the information. They may also accept PSAs as outlined above.
- **COMMENTARY.** You can turn a print op-ed into a radio commentary by shortening it and then submitting into a station that accepts them, like your local NPR or Marketplace. Make sure to read it out loud to make sure it's suitable for a listening audience.

Internet

Increasingly, the Internet is becoming a huge source for news and events listing. In fact, by early 2003, some studies were estimating that up to half of people in their twenties and thirties used the Internet as their primary source of news. Clearly, the Internet isn't a source you can afford to ignore. It is increasingly becoming standardized, though parts are still the Wild West. Here are a few of the most important avenues:

- **NEWS.** Most national and local news sites have their own Web site, and plenty of people turn to the Web sites when they miss the local news. So everything on ABC World News Tonight will also be on ABCNews.com, right? Wrong. And everything on CNN.com doesn't make it onto CNN either. The same is probably true for your local station, as well. When working with your local newspaper, television, or radio station, ask about getting a story on their Web site as well. Many times, this will be something the producer or journalist can do himself or herself. In other cases, you may have to speak with a "web producer." It can mean extra work, but it will also mean extra eyes.

Other Web sites are only on the Web. This can include national sites like Slate.com or Salon.com, as well as local sites like Gothamgazette.com, a local Web site focusing on local politics, in this case New York City. You must contact these sites individually, and generally their contact information is available on their Web site. In some cases, these sites are listed in Bacon's or MediaMap. But keep in mind that others get their news on the Internet from blogs and electronic discussion lists and even through forwarded e-mails, which we'll discuss a little later.

- **CHATS.** If you have teenage kids, you probably have an idea what chats or chatrooms are. These "virtual rooms" allow many users (limits can vary, anywhere from twenty to thousands) to log onto a Web site and "chat" in real time. Each person has a unique ID and can communicate in real time, which will show up on the screen for all of the other users in the room to see. Sound chaotic? It can be.

But chats are becoming more and more mainstream. In fact, a recent American Library Association president has even been involved in a chat! Most large chats are moderated, meaning that users can't just post at will. Generally, there are one or two main guests in the room, generally celebrities, authors, or political candidates. Users can log into the chat and see everything that these guests post, but the users must submit the questions to a moderator. That moderator determines which get posted and which are disregarded.

Chats are increasingly becoming affordable ways of having a panel discussion or celebrity question-and-answer (Q&A) session. You don't have to worry about having enough room, seats, or food. The guest doesn't even have to be in the same state. Because chatrooms are virtually limitless, however, chats are not ideal ways of marketing.

- **ELECTRONIC DISCUSSION LISTS.** Electronic discussion lists are voluntary networks where individuals sign up to receive e-mails and messages “posted” or submitted by other electronic discussion list members or owners. Electronic discussion lists can be a lot like chatrooms, but instead of them happening very quickly on a Web page, they’re slower and the messages arrive via e-mail. Some electronic discussion lists are moderated, so only the moderator or approved messages can be posted. Other electronic discussion lists are a free-for-all, with all members able to post messages at will. Electronic discussion lists are very common for clubs or member organizations. They’re also an easy way to reach a large group of people who share similar interests.
- **VIRAL MARKETING.** If you are automatically thinking of the word virus when you think of viral marketing, you’re on the right track. Has a friend ever forwarded you a newsletter or other e-mail from a third party that they “just had to send you?” Well then, you’ve been reached by viral marketing.

The starkest example of viral marketing success is the Blair Witch Project. This independent horror movie had a very small marketing budget; but the producers tapped into the Internet, encouraging viewers to e-mail their friends about the movie, who in turn, e-mailed their friends. The buzz about the movie grew exponentially, and the movie became a multimillion-dollar enterprise.

Viral marketing is much like word-of-mouth marketing, but it generally relies on the Internet. Because e-mails can be duplicated and forwarded to multiple recipients—without damaging the content of the data—viral marketing is cheap and only limited in the ability of the product to sell itself. And you usually don’t have to worry about misinformation being passed like a bad game of telephone the way you do with word-of-mouth advertising. Most grassroots organizations use viral marketing to some degree by posting messages on electronic discussion lists with the hope that members of those electronic discussion lists will pass the message on to their friends and other electronic discussion lists.

- **BLOGS.** Blog is short for web-log or an online journal. There are millions of blogs on the web—an exact number is the subject of great debate, though the vast majority of them are rarely read. However, their ability to give instant news updates is driving them to become mainstays of many news organizations, including the *Washington Post*. During the 2004 Presidential Election bloggers were an integral part of the election coverage for millions of voters seeking alternative voices. As the candidates traveled the country, blogs kept track of their every move. Even before that, during the beginning of the Iraq war, many journalists posted to their blogs in between their official reports, giving hourly, even up-to-the-minute updates of what was happening.

So which blogs should you pay attention to? Good question. Obviously, you can’t track the millions of blogs out in the blogosphere. And numbers of visitors to certain blogs aren’t easy to come by. But the Online Journalism Review (www.ojr.org) has tracked the blog phenomenon from the beginning and it occasionally ranks them.

How are you going to use blogs? Another good question. It’s not clear if bloggers are open to being pitched, the way you would pitch a journalist at a newspaper. It is also difficult to say if blogs have much influence on a local level. But blogs are becoming a thriving source of news, so you should at least keep them on your radar, even if you don’t know what to do with them yet.

The following are a lists of blogs that focus on libraries:

<http://www.libdex.com/weblogs.html>

LIBDEX is an extensive worldwide directory of library websites, web-based OPACs (Online Public Access Catalogue), friends of library pages and library e-commerce affiliate links.

<http://www.blogwithoutalibrary.net/>

BLOG WITHOUT A BLOG details specifically what libraries across the country are currently doing with blogs.

<http://www.lisnews.com>

LISNEWS is devoted to reporting on current events and news affecting the library and information science community.

<http://www.library.gsu.edu/news/index.asp>

A subject specific blog, the GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY blog connects you to sites on subjects ranging from SARS epidemic in Asia to the condition of the Russian economy to relations between men and women in U.S society.

<http://www.theshiftedlibrarian.com>

THE SHIFTED LIBRARIAN is a personal blog written by a librarian for librarians. Dedicated to helping librarians keep up with their technologically savvy users this blog allows them to deliver information to their users in their preferred medium and platform.

http://dmoz.org/Reference/Libraries/Library_and_Information_Science/Weblogs/

Constructed and maintained by a vast community of volunteer editors from around the world, THE OPEN DIRECTORY, provides a comprehensive directory of blogs written by and for librarians.

Wires

Wires are independent news organizations that provide dispatches to multiple papers or broadcast organizations. Common services include the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Knight Ridder, and the United Press International (UPI). Your local paper may subscribe to a wire service. If so, you may want to contact a reporter from that news organization to let them know if you have succeeded in getting a wire placement so they can opt to run your story.

Many daily newspapers are owned by companies with wires (for example, Atlanta Journal Constitution/Cox), so that an article that will appear in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* can also appear in a dozen other papers nationwide. Wires should be a focus of your outreach. A single article can go a long way, affecting not only your library, but libraries across the country.

Wire Services

Wire Services should not be confused with wires (such as the Associated Press). Wire services are pay services that allow you to post your press releases, and the services then mass distributes the press release to hundreds of journalists. It's a good way to get out national news to hundreds of outlets at a time—but it's less effective for local news.

Wire Services include PRNewswire, USNewswire, and HispanicNewswire.

Developing a Media List

Lists are the backbone of your media work. Whether you're mailing a news release or calling a reporter with a fast-breaking story, you'll need an up-to-date media list.

Most libraries are computerized. Common databases such as Microsoft Access or Filemaker are good for lists. Make sure that the program can print out both labels and call lists with the information you desire. Always print labels well in advance of a mailing to ensure it goes smoothly. Consider having two computer consultants (or staff) familiar with your database for a crisis—a great role for a board member or other volunteer.

Media Guides

To start, consider consulting any of the following media guides:

- **Bacon's Directories (Newspaper, Magazine, Television/Cable, Radio, Internet, News Services and Syndicates)**—Published annually. This is a great resource for outlets across the United States and Canada and contains local and national information about shows and publications. Bacon's also is available online via Bacon's MediaSource (subscription based) and Bacon's MediaLists (a pay-as-you-go-service). **Contact:** Bacon's Information Inc., 332 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60604, (800) 972-9252, www.bacons.com
- **Bacon's New York Publicity Outlets/Bacon's Metro California Media**—Published annually. A comprehensive directory of newspapers, dailies, magazines, networks, stations, journalists, and editorial staffs for each of these key national markets. **Contact:** See information for Bacon's Information Inc. above.
- **FINDERBINDER News Media Directories**—Published annually. A detailed information and rate directory covering media services in selected metropolitan and state areas. **Contact:** Finderbinder News Media Directories National Support Center, 8546 Chevy Chase Dr., La Mesa, CA 91941, (800) 255-2575, www.finderbinder.com
- **Gebbie Press: The All-in-One-Directory**—Published annually. Directory listing all United States newspapers, TV, radio, magazines, Black and Hispanic media, syndicates, and networks in print, disk, or CD-ROM. **Contact:** Gebbie Press, PO Box 1000, New Paltz, NY 12561, (845) 255-7560, www.gebbieinc.com
- **Leadership Directories: News Media Yellow Book**—Updated quarterly. A quick guide to Who's Who among reporters, writers, editors, and producers in the leading national news media. It contains an extensive listing of journalists by title and assignment. It is also available online and on CD-ROM. **Contact:** Leadership Directories Inc., 104 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10011, (212) 627-4140, www.leadershipdirectories.com
- **MM Performa (Newspaper, Magazine, Television/Cable, Radio, Internet, News Services and Syndicates)**—Formerly called MediaMap, this online database is now part of Bacon's and provides information and profiles on journalists, editors, producers, and analysts at media outlets throughout the United States and Canada. Profiles include contact information and contact preferences. **Contact:** MM Performa, 311 Arsenal Str.t, Watertown, MA 02472, (617) 393-3200, www.mmperforma.com.

Consider banding together with other libraries to purchase media guides. Subject to copyright restrictions, offer other libraries this resource.

How to Create and Update Your Media List

Now that you have the guides, remember this: *journalists change jobs often*. Rely on these guides for addresses and phone numbers only, as names become outdated quickly.

Update your list of names before you fax, conduct a mailing, or begin to make phone calls. This will ensure that as TV shows and entire publications come and go you will have the correct information.

Volunteers, Friends, or support staff should update your media list every three to four months. This takes a simple phone call to the print or broadcast outlet. Do it well in advance of a planned distribution, when you're much less likely to get the e-mail address, zip code, or name wrong.

Be sure your lists include the correct job title and the spelling of a journalist's name. Sending a news release to CITY EDITOR is like sending a piece of personal mail to OCCUPANT. It is likely to end up in the trash.

How to Organize Your List

Most publicists organize their lists by print, radio, TV, and the Internet; then alphabetically, by outlet, broadcast show, or print section; and then by journalist. In addition to the regular contact information—address, phone, fax number, e-mail address, beat, and deadline—you may want to include comments about your last interaction with the journalist or recent stories they wrote (for example, "Wrote about our summer reading program.").

Make sure you have the correct names of daytime, evening, and weekend staff at both print

and broadcast outlets if they differ—and off-hours phone numbers, if you can get them.

Keep a short media “Key Contacts” list right by your phone with the names, phone numbers, addresses, and fax numbers of the key reporters, news directors of your local TV and radio stations, sympathetic columnists, and others you’d want to contact for a breaking story.

Media Events and Tactics: How the Media Takes Notice

Following are several types of events/campaigns that can be planned for visibility purposes:

- **GUEST SPEAKER OR SEMINAR:** If your library is hosting a guest speaker or an evening event and your mission is to get the word out, determine what media you will use, that medium’s deadlines, and fashion your timeline accordingly (see below for specific media types).
- **A BALLOT INITIATIVE OR REFERENDUM:** Perhaps a referendum concerning your library is on the ballot. If so, plan as far ahead as possible. While you might not take action immediately, planning ahead will give you the option. Create a flexible timeline that includes specific goals along the way. When do you want letters to the editor to appear in your local paper? Should you or one of your representatives talk to the editorial board of your paper? If so, when?

Closer to Election Day, your timeline might be choreographed quite tightly. For example, the night before the election a predetermined number of supporters receive phone calls reminding them to vote the next day. Then, on Election Day, be sure to call your supporters to ask them to vote—turning out your voters will be key to success. Someone from your library will need to spearhead this effort by organizing a phone tree or a schedule of volunteer callers and lists of callees.

Be sure to note who at your library is responsible for taking each step along the way and for monitoring progress. Provide your staff or volunteers with tools to meet their goals, such as telephones and a list of supporters with directions on how to keep track of responses. Have a substitute in place in case someone becomes unavailable.

News Conferences

First, ask yourself if the topic is worth a news conference or is a press release sufficient?

- Is your topic newsworthy, or is it merely noteworthy? Newsworthy information can carry an entire dinner conversation; noteworthy information can only carry on for a minute or two.
- Do you have video component for TV, graphics/charts, or a personality, if possible?
- What will you gain from a question-and-answer format?
- Could an event (for example, a TV crew on a tour of the library) convey your story better?

If you decide to go ahead, here are some tips:

- **CHOOSE A CONVENIENT TIME**
 - Try to avoid conflicts with other big events by:
 - Looking at schedules in your local paper.
 - Cruising online for upcoming events.
 - Asking friends in media re: conflicts.
 - Praying.
 - Best times
 - 10 A.M.–noon for print P.M. deadlines.
 - 10 A.M.–3:30 P.M. for electronics.
 - Weekends are often good since “news hole” exists with less competition—but fewer crews and journalists are available.
- **CHOOSE AN ACCESSIBLE LOCATION**
 - Your site should be:
 - familiar to media;
 - connected to your topic—such as in the library online room for a technology

- event—for visuals; and
 - easy to get cameras into and, when possible, wheelchair accessible.
 - If the location isn't yours, make sure you get any needed permission in writing beforehand.
 - CONTACTING THE MEDIA
 - Initial notice/advisory
 - Draft "Notice of a News Conference" in outline form including Who/What/When/Where/Why—list contact person and that interviews are available.
 - Send/fax and e-mail to major news directors, assignment editors, wire services, etc., one week to three days in advance of news conference.
 - Send also to individuals who have covered the topic or related news conferences.
 - Reminder
 - Calls to news directors and friendly reporters early that morning.
 - If you're in the state capital or major city, go around the state House or city hall press room and talk to journalists and deliver your material.
 - Offer to do phone interviews or voice feeds for those who can't attend.
 - PLANNING THE ACTUAL NEWS CONFERENCE
 - Materials
 - Plan to have appropriate background materials, such as flyers, fact sheets, and brochures for attendees to take with them.
 - Draft a press release to go in the press packet summarizing news with key quotes and contact name.
 - Plan to use a colorful banner or poster behind the podium that says your library name and possibly has a logo or message pertaining to the subject of the press conference.
 - Program
 - Plan on few speakers—no more than four or five. Keep it short (Total time should be NO LONGER THAN fifteen minutes) and to one point.
 - Brief all speakers beforehand (initially by phone and, if possible, in a group prior to the press conference). Talk to them about time, focus, and likely questions.
 - Choose someone to do introductions, direct questions, and end news conference.
 - Room set-up.
 - Work with site hosting the event to ensure you have the necessary room set-up items. These may include:
 - Sign-in table outside or immediately inside the room.
 - Table to place background materials.
 - Easels for posters or charts.
 - Place to hang library banner.
 - Podium or table with podium for speakers.
 - Proper or desired type of microphones, one for speaker and others for Q&A. Some may prefer lavalier microphones that clip onto clothing.
 - Mult-box: this is an audio unit that radio and television stations can hook their audio plugs into so that the sound comes directly from the podium microphone. In cases of breaking stories—where you want to see a lot of microphones at the podium—it's best not to ask for mults, just have media tape their microphones to the podium mike.
 - The event
 - Distribute the press kit with the release.
 - Distribute at same time to state House or city hall media if at legislature.
 - Prepare (or plant) several questions in the audience. Ask friends or friendly press who are sitting in the audience to open up the Q&A with one as soon as the news conference is complete.
 - Have back-up documentation, photos, and statistics available to help in answering

- questions.
 - Take attendance at a sign-in table. Note who asked sympathetic questions during the news conference. Write down unanswered or poorly answered questions.
- Follow-up
 - When the news conference ends, call people who said they would attend and did not to set up phone or in-person interviews or another way for them to get the story.
 - Fax, e-mail, or get releases to key outlets that didn't attend and may be interested.
 - Get back to anyone who asked an unanswered question at the news conference.
 - Fax releases to weeklies or others who normally don't send people to cover events.
 - Monitor press coverage—possibly use clipping service and distribute best clips online to a electronic discussion list, etc.
 - Thank those who covered well—supportive criticism also is appropriate.
 - Incorporate any new names, addresses, phone, or fax numbers into press list.
 - Review entire event to determine what went right and wrong. Learn from experience!

Media Briefing

When you don't have breaking news, but you have new and exciting information for the media to know about, you may consider holding a media briefing or a media breakfast. This would include a few researchers, volunteers, and/or spokespeople and five to fifteen media people who are very interested in your issue.

The only caveat with such a planned event is that media schedules are very fickle and outlets are suffering from limited resources—so only consider this type of event if you know a critical mass of your media contacts would be interested. For every two journalists who say they'll attend, expect one to cancel for other, last-minute priorities.

Editorial Board Meeting

As outlined in the *Library Advocates Handbook* (page 10), editorial board meetings are another option for media outreach. Editorial board meetings are ideal for situations where you either believe the newspaper could editorialize on an issue you're facing (like budget cuts) or when you believe the board will write in your favor. If you're facing a local newspaper that has been historically against your causes, this may not be the best tactic.

Media Tour

Media tours are a series of meeting with media professionals from generally geographically diverse areas. They are mostly used by national organizations that want to reach the local public, and will strategically choose cities to meet with individual reporters. The goal is usually to generate many articles with local angles.

One-on-One Media Visits

Nothing beats face-to-face contact. It's easier to convey any message in person than it is over the phone, or by just e-mail. But these meetings are often the hardest to get. As media professionals jobs become even more demanding, they have less time to spend in face-to-face interviews. However, when working with journalists, especially journalists who you expect will cover multiple stories about you or your library, in-person meetings are invaluable. Try to set them three to four weeks in advance, then confirm the day before.

Phone Pitch

Calling the media on the phone is one of the most important aspects of media outreach, but many

times is the first thing that drops off your list when you're busy. Think about carving out a set amount of time each day all year round to contact and develop relationships with media who will be able to deliver for when you're needing to get some visibility for your programs and services.

- **CREATE AND PRACTICE THE PITCH.** In order to ensure as much success as possible for your media event, you are encouraged to create a phone pitch to keep in front of you while talking to media on the phone. Think about the event you are trying to get coverage for and create a short description of the most important points you want to convey to a journalist or reporter on the other line. If you are nervous or haven't done much pitching before, take some time out and practice your phone pitch with a co-worker or friend. The more you say it out loud, the more comfortable you will feel when it is time to speak with the media.
- **CONSIDER DIFFERENT ANGLES.** Make sure you have different angles to offer the journalist or reporter you are pitching your event to. To be safe, practice two or three different ideas that you can pitch over the phone.
- **PITCH THE RIGHT PERSON.** Most importantly, you want to make sure that you are talking to the appropriate person. If you want a photographer to attend your event, make sure you are calling someone from the photo desk, not the technology desk. If you get in touch with someone who doesn't cover that beat any longer, ask if they know of anyone else in the department that you could speak with about your event.
- **ALWAYS START OFF THE CONVERSATION BY ASKING IF THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO TALK.** Proceed with your pitch. Have a media advisory ready to go. Often the person you are speaking with will ask you to e-mail or fax the information to them. It's ok if you don't have all the answers to the questions the person on the other line may ask you. Make sure to write down the questions they ask and get a phone number and a good time for you to convey the right information, or get an e-mail address.
- **KEEP A PHONE LOG OF ALL YOUR CALLS.** Mark down what day you called and whether or not you left a message or sent information over. This will come in handy when you are making your second or third round of calls.

Photo Ops

Photo ops provide you with an opportunity to get attention for your activities when there isn't a big news story involved. Photo ops work best when they're appealing for a quirky or sentimental reason. Photo ops of kids are often effective. Also, consider the unusual. A local school had a contest to raise money, and if the students were able to raise a certain amount, the principal promised he would kiss a pig. Of course they did raise enough money, and the photo of the principal and the pig made all the papers.

- When planning a photo-op, make sure that you include a VISUALS section in your media advisory to describe exactly what will be available for media to cover. Include directions to the site and phone numbers that will be staffed.
- Make sure your media list contains appropriate photo people to contact who can cover your event or arrange for coverage.
- Start your calls a few days before the day of the event. Most people will want the information sent to them the day before. You might have to make calls the morning of the event as well to confirm that the photographer knows exactly where he or she needs to go.
- Plan your photo-op with photos in mind. Have a library sign very visibly displayed. The Campaign for America's Libraries has super-sized library card available on its Web site. Clean up the clutter around the photo area unless it's part of the concept. Ask participants to dress colorfully in case of color photos.

Paid Advertising or Sponsorship

Did you know that paid advertising may be a very inexpensive way to get the word out about a specific program—especially to ensure that your message gets out? If you haven't yet explored it, spend some time calling to get not-for-profit ad rates and build it into your budget when appropriate for a

limited amount of time.

Did you ever consider bringing on media sponsors for events and activities? If not, call and establish a relationship with radio and television stations and perhaps they will sponsor an event. If they do, other stations may not cover the event, but you may just get the visibility and support you need. If you do find dedicated sponsors, their commitment may grow and they will become more involved over time. They may offer to have their news anchors or station celebrities host or emcee events, and you may get great coverage on at least the sponsoring station, rather than a media bust.

The Written Word: What You'll Need for the Media

An important step in getting your message to the media is the ability to communicate it succinctly and effectively. A well-written media advisory and news release can inform and also generate interest and excitement in your event, campaign, or happening.

What Is a Media Advisory?

A media advisory alerts the media, in a concise manner, to *upcoming* events and developments pertinent to your library and community. Think of it like an invitation and answer only the important questions: Who, What, When, Where, and Why.

Key elements of a media advisory

- It should be brief and to the point.
- It should contain a headline detailing the most important information.
- It should include the five Ws mentioned above.
- It should include contact information for reporters to get more information for their pieces and the contact information you would like to be published if this is for a listing.
- It should include a boilerplate, which is basically a brief description of your library, located at the end of the advisory. If there is little room left for this, you can shrink the type size for this paragraph.

The format of a media advisory

- At the top left side of the page write MEDIA ADVISORY.
- Underneath include the date of your event; for example, "For Sept. 19, 2004."
- At the top right side of the page include your contact information.
- At the bottom of the page type # # # indicating the end of the advisory.
- Be sure to print out the advisory on your library letterhead.

Sample Advisory

Media Advisory for
Thursday, April 10, 2003

***American Library Association and Library Users Rally to
Save America's Libraries***

Rally continues effort to sustain library funding and services

WHAT: The American Library Association (ALA) will host a National Library Week rally to Save America's Libraries- a public awareness effort focused on the essential services libraries provide and the negative impact of library funding cuts nationwide.

WHO: Maurice J. (Mitch) Freedman, **ALA President**
Ginnie Cooper, Executive Director, **Brooklyn Public Library**
Mary K. Conwell, Senior Vice President, **The New York Public Library**
Gary Strong, Library Director, **Queens Borough Public Library**
Janet Welch, **Assistant Commissioner for Education for NY State**
Sally Reed, Executive Director, **Friends of Libraries USA**

Diane Courtney, President, **New York Library Association**

A mother and her daughter, a senior citizen and an immigrant

WHEN: Thursday, April 10, at 11 A.M.

WHERE: On the steps of the Flushing Branch of the Queens Borough Public Library, 41-17 Main Street, Flushing NY

(Map: www.queenslibrary.org/dispBranch.asp?count=20)

- WHY:**
- At the Queens Borough Public Library's 60 locations, Sunday service was reduced from 14 branches to 3 branches. The majority of the other branches are going from six to five-day service. Brooklyn Public Library has reduced important community programs and experienced a 16 percent reduction in hours since 2002.
 - At New York Public Library, 71 of 89 locations are now open only five days a week. Each branch has lost more than 3,000 books due to a reduced book budget.
 - Millions of Americans pass through libraries each year, but without adequate support, these resources may not be there when students, families, senior citizens, professors, business people, and others, need them most. A recent national poll showed that more than 90 percent of adult Americans believe public libraries will play an important role in the future.

For more information, or to schedule an interview, call Agatha Ponickly or Beth George at 212-245-0510.

The American Library Association is the oldest and largest library association in the world, with more than 64,000 members. Its mission is to promote the highest quality library and information services and public access to information. ALA offers professional services and publications to members and nonmembers, including online news stories from American Libraries and analysis of crucial issues from the Washington Office. Be a part of it—library worker or advocate—join today!

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What Is a News Release?

A news release has a different purpose from a media advisory. It should read like an article, with quotes and facts, to stimulate possible pick-up by small papers and to generate print and broadcast reports at larger outlets. Whereas a media advisory offers basic information, a news release creates an image and story that journalists can use alone or use as background when writing a story.

Key Elements of a News Release

- Your release should be written like an actual news story, in the inverted pyramid style of news writing—with a headline and the most important information at the top.
- Your release should include quotes from spokespeople.

The Format of a News Release

- At the top left side of the page write NEWS.
- Underneath write FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE and under that the date.
- At the top right side of the page include your contact information.
- Type # # # indicating the end of your release (located at the bottom of the page).
- Be sure to print out the release on your library's letterhead.

Sample News Release

NEWS

For Immediate Release

September 30, 2003

To Read or Not to Read: That Is the Teen Question

Poetry slams, Contests, Readings Hosted Nationwide in Celebration of Teen Read Week 2003

CHICAGO—In an era of Xbox and cell phones, teens across the country are encouraged to adopt an additional pastime-reading. Teens throughout the country will participate in Teen Read Week 2003: SLAM-MIN' @ your library® (October 19–25, 2003), a celebration of the popularity of poetry with teen readers. Interview opportunities are now available with leadership from Teen Read Week's creator Young Adult

Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of the American Library Association.

Public libraries, school library media centers, and bookstores across America will host poetry slams, open mic nights and poetry contests and readings in an effort to make reading as much a part of the teen scene as Hip-Hop music and instant messaging.

Since its inception in 1998, Teen Read Week, an annual literacy initiative, has focused on the importance of teen recreational reading. Teen Read Week's objectives are to give teens an opportunity to read for the fun of it, allow teens to select their own reading materials, and to help teens get in the habit of reading regularly and often.

Between sports, clubs, homework, and other activities, it is tough for teens to find time for recreational reading, and children that read less begin to lose their reading skills. According to a study by The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), there have been only modest gains in national reading achievement over the last 20 years.

Research has shown that teens that read "for the fun of it" are more likely to develop strong reading skills and cohesive reading habits. Just like any other hobby, reading takes practice. Solid reading habits increase reading proficiency and significantly increase reading test scores.

The observance of Teen Read Week reminds us that every teen is a potential reader, and that it is important for parents not only to encourage their young children to read, but provide the time and support for their teenagers to read, as well. Parents, teachers and librarians can also serve as role models for teens by reading for fun themselves.

Teen Read Week supporting organizations include: American Association of School Administrators; American Booksellers Association; Cable in the Classroom; International Reading Association; Kids Care; KIDSNET; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Council of Teachers of English; National Education Association; National School Boards Association; SmartGirl.org; The N/Noggin; Speak Up Press; and TeenInk.

Corporate sponsors include Barnes & Noble Booksellers, Harper Collin, Harcourt, Inc., Morningstar Foods, Inc., Corporate friend Scholastic, Inc., and individual friend Pamela Spencer Holley.

For more information visit the Teen Read Week Web site at www.ala.org/teenread.

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Don't Send this News Release

Following is a sample of a release that should not be sent:

For more information call: 9/8/99
Jo Brown, Director 212/555-4567
Mary Smith, Publicist 212/555-1234

Press release

The Bobstown Library System (BLS), one of the most important state-wide membership organizations—were happy to say that they are looking forward to the upcoming 2004 election—when Bobstown residents voters will be able to cast their votes for their state's schools and libraries.

At this point in time, the BLS thinks that most people would be in favor of having libraries stocked with books at all times—and even with computers for special projects.

They also feel that people would strongly support the new Library Technology Referendum in the voting booth, a local program that will help to hook up a majority of libraries and schools for not too much. As a matter of fact, Bobstown was able to make many computer upgrades for just \$50,000 last year. This was across the entire system. Some of the money was used for Internet access, new software and network cabling. They hope to make even more improvements if the referendum passes.

It all depends on voters. If they are supportive of such programs as this one for libraries, which according to a recent poll 89% do support, then maybe libraries will be able to survive this turbulent economic time.

A Guide to Your Release By-Numbers

The following is a well-formatted release with a guide to the key elements.

News Release

1

For release

Wednesday, September 25, 2003

2

Contact: Lib Rarian, 212/555-4567

3

NEW POLL SHOWS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR LIBRARIES

The Public Shows How Library Resources Are Valuable Tools For Everyone

4

Anytown, USA—A new poll of likely voters showed more than 90% of voters support increased funding for local libraries.

The poll, released today by the Anytown Library Association, showed that registered voters who are likely to vote in the upcoming election support additional funding to enable libraries to get and stay on line.

5

“Our libraries offer the best mix of global reach and local touch,” says Ana Bowan, Executive Director of the Anytown Library Association (ALA), the state’s third largest library group. “This poll shows Anytowners want their libraries wired.”

The bipartisan poll, conducted by Some Big Firm, Inc., is the first statewide survey of support for the libraries in the last five years.

At \$1,000 per year, Anytown has the smallest budget in the state for new technology. The upcoming referendum on library funding will increase spending to \$100,000 for the next three years, allowing libraries to increase and update their technology and get library-based web training programs.

6—more—

7 Library Poll, page 2

8

According to an earlier survey Anytown Library conducted last spring, “Parents *hate* that their kids know the Net better than they do,” says Mary Smith, Anytown’s head librarian.

“Librarians can untangle the Net for families,” she adds. “We train kids and their parents to browse the Net together, so Mom and Dad lose their fear of cyberspace and can exercise proper parental guidance.”

To arrange to interview ALA spokespeople and for a copy of Anytown’s poll, please contact Lib Rarian at 212/555-4567.

10

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11

The Anytown Library Association (ALA) is a member organization of more than 200 librarians across the state from public libraries, academic institutions, schools and special libraries. Supporters such as trustees, friends of the library members, vendors and users are also part of ALA.

A Guide To Your Release-By-Numbers

1. Indicate up top when news organizations are free to use the material in this release.
2. Indicate one contact name with title and a phone number with an answering machine that takes messages or a cell phone.
3. Keep headline to one line or eight words and use descriptive, active verbs. Use subhead. Be sure your organization’s name appears at least once.
4. Your first paragraph should be attention-getting.
5. Use a short, lively quote by your third paragraph.
6. “—more—” is a convention that lets journalists know the release is continued on the next page.
7. Put an identifying header on top of the second page in case it becomes separated from page one.
8. Refer to some news you once made that never got covered, but might make it into this story.
9. If you have additional backup materials you could make available to interested journalists, let them know—and let them know where to call, especially if it’s a different number than your page one contact number or the online link.
10. “###” indicates the end of the release.
11. Create a “boiler plate” standard paragraph that you can include at the bottom of all releases

and elsewhere that describes your organization and its mission.

Pitch Letter

Pitch letters are short introductions to a story that you would like a journalist to cover. They're teasers. You should use them to pique a journalists' interest. Pitch letters should explain why you want them to cover this story, why they need to read this press release, or why they really need to interview you about this topic.

Unlike press releases or media advisories, there are no hard-and-fast rules for pitch letters. Many are rather formal letters, others are as tongue-in-cheek lists, such as "Top 10 Reasons You Should . . ." Pitch letters must be short—absolutely no more than a page—and it's best to keep in mind that their intent is not to give the full picture, but an interesting glimpse.

Sample Pitch Letter

Dear Journalist,

During difficult economic times like these, more and more Americans flock to their local libraries. Libraries offer tools that help people get back on their feet—access to information for searching for jobs and small business opportunities, free access to the Internet and e-mail, as well as free access to recreational materials.

Yet libraries in (CITY, STATE) and the nation are experiencing the deepest cuts in a decade.

On January 23, thousands of librarians from around the U.S. gathered in Philadelphia to launch The Campaign To Save America's Libraries. We expect to do four national rallies, a 15-city radio campaign and meet with many editorial boards around the country through the spring.

During National Library Week, April 6-12, 2003, The Campaign To Save America's Libraries will surface in every major American city. Our spokespeople will be available to talk about any one of the following topics:

- The Campaign—budget cuts and lack of funding in libraries
- Pay equity for librarians—Everyone loves librarians, but librarians can't live on love alone
- Patriot Act—an act that allows the FBI to come to libraries without search warrants to track what patrons read and what Web sites they surf
- CIPA, the Children's Internet Protection Act, a case decided in federal court in Philadelphia, now before the Supreme Court.

To arrange an interview with someone from the American Library Association to talk about what is happening to libraries in your community, please contact YOUR NAME at PHONE NUMBER.

Sample Op-Ed

What's In Your Wallet?

By Carla Hayden

I still remember the first time my mother took me to a library. There was something magical about all those books. I think most people can recall the first time they carefully selected a book from the shelves and took it up to the check-out desk. The library had paper cards when I was a child, and the staff member stamped the return date on it and slipped it in the back pocket before giving me the book.

Paper slips have been replaced by bar codes and card catalogs by extensive online databases; but libraries are still magical places for children and adults.

September is National Library Card Sign-Up Month. And while many places now require you to have a card for discounts or special “club benefits,” your library card provides free access to a world of resources in print and online, along with the expert assistance of librarians and other library staff.

Free public libraries were born in this country. As librarians, we believe that knowledge should be free and accessible to all, regardless of race or gender, income, disability or even geography. Whether we come to your rural town in a bookmobile or offer large-print books to those of us still in denial that we need reading glasses, libraries are a one-stop solution to finding that bestseller, childhood favorite—or even job or scholarship opportunities.

Unfortunately, across our nation, people are finding it harder to access their local libraries. Many libraries are facing painful cuts as most states and communities face tough budget deficits. The New York Public Library is asking patrons to make donations at the check out desk. Pennsylvania state library funds have been cut in half. Several California libraries have put “wish lists” online for books they can no longer afford to buy. West Virginia state residents now have to pay \$50 a year to check books out from West Virginia University library—a service that has always been free to the public. And the downtown Denver Public Library is closed on Wednesdays now, with more cuts planned in the future. What many of us are quickly losing is access to the great equalizer: knowledge.

For each of these stories about the libraries themselves, there are hundreds, if not thousands of children and adults who will have less access to their libraries and to the great resources libraries carry. Our national treasures are increasingly being put out of reach just when we are facing trying economic times and need libraries even more.

Libraries help people, regardless of income or location, develop the necessary skills for the workforce. As knowledge changes form, from paper to screen, libraries have been on the forefront of the digital revolution, ensuring that all Americans have free access to computers and the Internet. Yet budget cuts are shutting off computers and sending us farther behind the technology curve.

Unlike bookstores, libraries aren't just located in malls or high-potential sales areas—we're in cities, small towns and some extremely rural areas. We don't just stock bestsellers, we have obscure classics, and non-fiction research books. Our librarians can help your child find the reputable Web site to finish that school paper. We don't just have audio books for the visually impaired or commuter—we have Braille books. With degrees in library science and navigation experience, librarians don't only find what you're looking for, we know a dozen different resources that you didn't even know you needed. And many of our newest libraries have the coffee shops and comfortable chairs that are the perfect companion to a good book.

As you finish up back-to-school shopping, remember that a library card is your child's best school supply. It's free and it won't go out of style. Public libraries offer homework help and afterschool programs—keeping kids reading for the fun of it throughout the year.

This month, support your local library and library staff by taking someone to the library who hasn't yet discovered its magic. Or, if it's been a while, come check us out again—you'll be pleasantly surprised. This time, maybe you'll find the latest Stephen King or that memoir you haven't gotten around to reading; but checking out a book from your local library shouldn't just be a memory.

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Carla Hayden is the 2003–2004 president of the American Library Association and executive director of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Note: Letters to the editor can usually be submitted by email, just check with the paper. If mailed or faxed, submit, double spaced, on your stationery. In all cases submit with a phone number to

reach you at so they can call to get any edits approved, They should not exceed 250 words, but some only take as few as 100 words. Read some to see what your paper runs.

Dear (name):

These days, we all know latchkey kids, small businesses seeking niche markets and seniors with more time than money.

Right here in (name of community) there's common ground for them all.

It's a place where you can log on to get stock quotes, find a salt free diet, learn CPR, notarize a lease or take out the latest mystery.

It's @ your library. There's just one catch. Just as the information revolution is transforming America, they tell us in (name of community) that we need to wait in line for funding, behind firefighters, nurses, even road crews. Some say we should get no state funds at all because we give the public access to some ideas with which they disagree.

Libraries provide a vital service. We change lives. We help surgeons save lives with data piped right into operating rooms. Our patrons do legal research to cut down on phone time with their attorneys. Parents can squelch family feuds by finding the book value of the used car their grown child wants to buy.

To serve the people of (name of community), stock our shelves, get new software and staff our reading rooms, the silence must end. When school starts this fall, your library needs every card carrying member to urge our state legislators to support your right to know.

Sincerely,

Your name/position/name of your library

Sample Public Service Announcement

Submit public service announcements (PSA) double spaced. Most PSAs are fifteen or thirty seconds, roughly between forty and seventy-five words. Each digit in a phone number, which for broadcasts is best repeated twice, counts as a word.

Since FCC rules have changed, stations are no longer required to run a certain number of PSAs to keep their licenses, nor must they keep logs. They frequently run PSAs at odd hours. Deadlines are often two weeks ahead of the airdates. Following is a sample PSA. You can also link to others at www.ala.org/ala/pio/campaign/prtools/campaignPSAs.htm.

(30 seconds)

WHERE'S THE BEST SOUL FOOD IN TOWN? FIND A SCHOLARSHIP TO CAMP OR COLLEGE. START A BUSINESS. LEARN TO NAVIGATE THE NET TO KEEP UP WITH YOUR KIDS. OR CHECK OUT A NEW MYSTERY.

IT'S ALL FREE. @ YOUR LIBRARY. THE SMART CHOICE FOR THE INFORMATION AGE.

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM THIS STATION, THE [STATE] LIBRARY ASSOCIATION AND [NAME OF YOUR LIBRARY].

Online Pressrooms

As technology has changed the world, so has it changed the media. The public expects their news not in the morning paper, but instantly, online. News organizations have put the pressure on journalists to deliver just that. And now journalists want your press releases, fact sheets, bios, back-grounders, and other information at the tip of their fingers at any time of day.

One of the biggest complaints we hear from journalists these days is that a library doesn't have an online pressroom with up-to-date information. Try not to be caught without one.

This should be very accessible to media—preferably a click on your home page.

If you don't already have one, here are some hints:

- At minimum, your online pressroom should contain contact information (phone, fax, e-mail) for your communications staff member. But you should also consider posting and archiving:
 - every press release you issue;
 - fact sheets about your library (how many books are there, how many staff, etc.);

- bios of your director and key staff; and
- a section about upcoming events or legislation that is affecting the library.
- To think of other useful items consider what you would need to know if you knew nothing about your library, but needed to write a story about one.

The Spoken Word—Interviewing

People often panic when reporters call. There’s no reason for most people to fear a journalist’s questions. In fact, it’s often a great opportunity—if you practice and know how to take advantage of it.

Who Are Your Spokespeople? Director, Children’s Librarian, Volunteer?

When media opportunities or interviews arise, or when planning media outreach, you need to consider who your best spokespeople will be. Generally, your director is the key spokesperson. However, depending on the size of your library and the amount of media attention you receive, you may need to identify additional individuals to speak on your behalf. This could include program or other appropriate staff, members of your board, volunteers, or members of the community who can sing your praises.

Spokespeople need to have media training, follow tips for talking to reporters, and be well prepared in advance of any interviews. If you go to people outside of your staff, it is always a good idea to be in close touch with them about their contribution well before you need them. Look into professional or pro bono media trainers—to practice soundbites on or off camera—who can help you professionalize and personalize your messaging.

It’s also a good idea to work with your spokespeople every year or two to update and freshen up their messages and talking points. Again this can be done by qualified staff or outside consultants.

How You Can Help Train Spokespeople

The following section appears in the ALA’s Library Advocates Handbook. Thanks to Patricia Glass-Schuman, former ALA president.

The goal of media coaching is simple: to help people channel their passion, personality, and commitment to an issue, whether they’re appearing on TV, speaking to a group of legislators, or talking to a reporter over lunch. The most effective and engaging spokespeople are those who are prepared, focused, genuinely enthusiastic, and comfortable with themselves.

Key Points

1. **HONE YOUR MESSAGE AND DEVELOP SOUND BITES:** This is critical! For a successful interview, use the messages developed for your campaign. Refine them by defining key points and finding the most effective phrases, facts, and examples for illustrating those points. Think about your target audience and how to best reach them.

To develop sample sound bites, brainstorm sound bites with friends, family, and colleagues. Choose vivid images. Paint pictures with words. Try them out on friends.

Below we’ve included some examples. More are available at the ALA’s online message book: www.ala.org/ala/pio/campaign/aboutyourlibrary/keymessages.htm.

- On funding:
 - Invest in futures. Support libraries.
 - We’re finding it difficult to meet twenty-first-century demands with nineteenth-century budgets.
 - Everyone loves libraries. But libraries can’t live on love alone.
 - The future is @ your library®, so make sure your library has a future.

- On role of libraries and librarians:
 - Libraries open minds.
 - Libraries change lives.
 - Libraries save lives.
 - Libraries are your passport to cyberspace.
 - Librarians are the guardians of your right to know.
 - Librarians support parents. We don't replace them.
 - Libraries bring you the world.
 - Libraries are places of opportunity.
 - Online:
 - Libraries blend global reach and local touch.
 - Libraries are the lynchpin of the information age.
 - The ultimate search engine is @ your library®. It's your librarian.
2. DO A DRY RUN. On the way home from work, at staff meetings, or at someone else's desk at lunchtime, rehearse your remarks before interviews. Your colleagues are even more likely than reporters to know the tough questions that might be thrown at you. That will give you the chance to prepare a reply, try it out, time it (for live broadcasts especially), and revise. Tape yourself on audio or video. Play it back, so you can hear yourself as others do. Then refine your presentation.
 3. IDENTIFY YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS FOR EACH TYPE OF OUTLET (TV, radio, print), and use the training to work on one specific type of outlet. Most problems are nonverbal. They may include: adopting a wooden body posture; presenting material too technically; averting, darting, or poorly using eyes; ineffective use of hands; lack of facial expression or one that communicates fear, hostility, arrogance, or defensiveness; low energy; humorlessness; and use of boring language. Have your trainer help to identify them and then work on ways to improve.
 4. IMPROVE PERSONAL STYLE: Everyone has a personal style. What is yours? How is your physical appearance? Your rate of speech, pitch, and tone of voice? Your level of animation, use of gestures, eye contact, comfort level? Bring your full personality and most expressive physical self to every interview in person or by telephone.
 5. DEALING WITH DIFFICULT INTERVIEWS: Hostile interviewers or interview questions often throw the most experienced public speakers off guard. It's important to redirect a question if you need to, but be sure to respond in a way that is positive, contributes to the dialogue, and doesn't make you look evasive or defensive. If a reporter uses negative, incorrect, or inflammatory words in a question, don't legitimize them by repeating the misconception in your answer. The hotter the interviewer gets, the cooler you need to be. Stay friendly, calm, and direct in a response to a nasty questioner or loaded question.

How to Direct an Interview

Staying in control of an interview can help you get your message out—and save you from future headaches. Skilled spokespeople can take any question thrown at them, answer it, and bring it back to their original message—all within a few sentences. Below are some tips for directing interviews.

- ASK QUESTIONS BEFORE ACCEPTING TO DO AN INTERVIEW. Be sure you know the angle the journalist is coming from and who else is being interviewed.
- TAKE TIME TO PREPARE. Even the most skilled media spokespeople will take a few minutes to prepare. If the reporter is on deadline, ask to call him or her back in five minutes. That should be enough time to give you a chance to focus on your key messages.
- NEVER ANSWER QUESTIONS YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. If they ask you a question that's vague or needs clarification, ask. Interviews aren't one-way streets.
- BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION. Don't ever answer a question you don't thoroughly understand. Even if you're live, on air, ask a reporter to repeat the question or rephrase

it. Restate it yourself, buying time to compose an answer, but be especially sure you understand just what you're being asked. You may even clear up the reporter's confusion or misstatement.

- **THINK BEFORE YOU ANSWER.** You can always buy yourself time by saying, "That's a good question." You can also pause before you begin your answer to get your thoughts in order.
- **AVOID ONE-WORD ANSWERS.** "Yes" and "No" won't help you get your point across. Take the opportunity to expand, or bring the conversation back to your main message.
- **FLAG IMPORTANT STATEMENTS.** By saying "The most important thing here is . . ." or "The real issue here is . . ." you not only get the reporter's attention, you get the audience's attention too. These are also good transitional phrases when you want to redirect the interviewer's question to your key message.
- **DON'T REPEAT THE REPORTER'S BAD PHRASING.** For example, if a reporter says, "but isn't it true that libraries are no longer necessary because of the Internet," don't respond using that bad opinion by saying, "no, it isn't true that libraries are no longer necessary." Instead, turn it around to something positive: "Librarians are your ultimate search engine" and so forth.
- **BEWARE OF LEADING QUESTIONS.** Some reporters try to influence interviews by saying "Would you say" or "isn't it true." Avoid following into the trap of agreeing with them. If you don't agree, or if it's not true, but sure to say, "No. Actually, the truth is . . ."
- **STAY "ON MESSAGE."** If an interview starts on the wrong topic, be sure to bring it back to what you're really there to discuss. You can do that by "bridging," such as, "well, that's an interesting question, but what we really need to address is . . ."
- **HOOK YOUR INTERVIEWER.** By saying "There are three important point here . . ." the interviewer (and the audience) is automatically waiting for those three points. It grabs the interviewer's attention, and they can't cut you off before you finish the three points without annoying their audience.
- **BRIDGING:** This is a technique that lets you "build a bridge" from a reporter's agenda to your own. For example: "That's an important question, Fred, but what's critical for people to know about library literacy is . . ." These and several other techniques can help you keep control of the interview, make sure you get your points across, and speak directly to the television audience. Your conversation must always be geared to the viewer—not the reporter.

How to Succeed on Radio

Hints:

1. **LISTEN TO THE SHOW TO LEARN HOW IT WORKS.** Before you call to get on a radio talk show, listen to it so you know the format, the length of segments, and host's style.
2. **CALL AT LEAST TWO WEEKS AHEAD TO BOOK A GUEST.** Prepare a brief bio on your spokesperson, a background on your library or program, and a one-page letter on what you have to say. Once you arrange an interview, send a written confirmation to the producer and the guest with a phone number for each to reach the other. Also make sure the guest and producer know who is to call who if the interview will take place by telephone.
3. **AVOID OFF-THE-WALL HOSTS.** With plenty of shows to choose from in most markets, there's no need to get insulted on the air. Pick a show that will give you a chance to deliver your message.
4. **TALK SLOWLY.** Vary your voice quality. Sound like you're dying to share some juicy gossip. Don't use too many numbers. Avoid jargon.
5. **PAINT VERBAL PICTURES.** Since body language can't connect you to your audience, try to paint pictures with words.
6. **PRACTICE IN PRIVATE.** Either with a friend co-worker or on tape, practice answering questions and handling hostile callers.
7. **REMEMBER TO MENTION YOUR LIBRARY NAME AT LEAST TWICE.** Since people tune in and out; just because you were introduced with an ID doesn't mean most listeners heard it. Bring a cassette and ask the engineer to pop it in so you can leave with a recording.
8. **LEARN TO ANSWER ODD QUESTIONS WITH THE POINTS YOU WANT TO MAKE.** It's ok once a show to say something like "That's an interesting question, Fred, but what I really hope you'll understand about libraries is . . ."

9. ORGANIZE A CAMPAIGN if you're having trouble getting on the air of a talk radio show. Write and call. Try to arrange to visit the producer or station manager. Send a demo audio cassette. If all else fails, call in while the show is on the air!
10. ORGANIZE SOME CALLERS if you get on the air for a show with call-ins. See that some friends of your library call, ask good questions, and show support.

How to Succeed on TV

The following section was originally developed by Patricia Glass-Schuman (former ALA president) in ALA's Library Advocates Handbook.

Hints:

1. DEVELOP THREE KEY POINTS IN ADVANCE: Television is a medium that requires you to be informal, relaxed, and conversational—but to get your message across forcefully in a very brief time. For most interviews, it's important to develop three key points and make those points quickly and effectively. Find the descriptive words, visual images, and concrete examples that best make those points.
2. PAINT PICTURES WITH YOUR WORDS. Especially for TV, but in all interviews, colorful phrases that call up visual images make interesting quotes. Keep a notebook of such images by your phone, along with key facts and good sound bites.
3. DRESS THE PART. If you're like most people, you've probably seen someone being interviewed on TV only to find yourself thinking, "what are they wearing?" Chances are, you can't remember what that person was talking about. With a visual news medium like TV, there are a few ways you can make sure you're being seen *and* heard.
 - Dos:
 - Business clothes/suits (it's harder to take someone seriously who is in jeans).
 - Remember: A microphone may need to be clipped onto a blouse or shirt from underneath, so imagine how that may work when selecting your clothing.
 - Jackets and ties for men.
 - Vibrant colors like blue, teal, rose, red, and burgundy.
 - Makeup: for women, make your makeup a little heavier than normal, but in your usual shades. For men, be prepared to wear a translucent powder and possibly foundation, especially in a studio setting. Going without makeup for men can result in looking sweaty or shiny.
 - Don'ts:
 - Women should avoid low-cut or sleeveless blouses and short skirts.
 - Men should avoid t-shirts and open shirts.
 - Plaid and large or busy prints.
 - Dangling jewelry.
 - Very dark or very light colors.
 - Hairstyles that may hang in your face or be distracting.

Tricks of the Trade

Inside Look: What a Journalist's Life Is Like

Sometimes the best way of understanding how to work with someone is to know how his or her work life is like. This is most true with working with journalists, whose curtness is often misunderstood.

A journalist's life can be summed up in three words: deadlines, deadlines, deadlines.

Daily newspaper journalists generally get to work by 9 A.M. and read not only their newspapers but the five to ten other newspapers and Web sites that they prefer to get their news from. From 10 A.M. until 1 P.M. or so, they make their calls, work on their schedule, arrange interviews, and pitch story ideas to their editors. By 2 P.M., they're on deadline. Deadlines are generally at 5 or 6 P.M., but

the faster they get their story to their editor, the happier their editor is. By 4 P.M., their editor wants to know how much longer it's going to take for them to finish.

What should you take from this? The best time to call a daily newspaper journalist is generally from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. While your schedule may be best suited for making calls around 4:30 or 5 P.M., when things start settling down for you, you're not likely to have a successful call with a journalist at that hour.

Weekly journalists work much the same, but their deadline is generally on a Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. Find out which day the weekly journalists have to file by and try not to call them on that day or the day before.

TV and radio producers work a lot like daily newspaper journalists, but their schedules vary depending on when the program occurs. Morning shows generally have producers running as soon as they get to work, generally as early as 5:30 A.M. You'd be surprised how much of a live show doesn't come together until seconds before it is aired. Who knows what is going to happen overnight before a morning show, or what might happen at the 5 P.M. rush hour drive right before the evening news?. Your best bet: try to avoid calling a producer the two hours before a show is scheduled to start (one-hour for a radio program) and for the hour afterwards. If a morning show ends at 9 A.M., producers are generally open to talking after 10 A.M. If an evening show doesn't start until 5 P.M., you will probably be able to reach your producer in the late morning.

But just like all staff in your library don't keep the same schedule, neither do journalists. These aren't hard-and-fast rules, but they are situations you're more likely to encounter.

Tips for Getting Your Name in a Reporter's Rolodex

- **BE ACCESSIBLE.** We all have meetings and other commitments. If you want to become a regular source for journalists, you **MUST** be accessible. Train the person who answers your phone to keep a separate log of reporters who call—with names, news outlets, direct phone, fax numbers, e-mail addresses, and deadlines. If you are in a meeting, that should be communicated along with "but I know she'd be eager to talk with you. Can I interrupt her—or can she call back by 3 P.M.? When do you need to hear from her? Can you tell me what you need to know so I can find someone else to help you right now?" Try to rearrange things if you can to avoid saying no the first several times radio or TV producers call to get onto their rolodexes.
- **BE SUCCINCT.** Don't ramble. Even print reporters have space constraints. And they can easily take your rambling comments out of context. If words don't roll off your tongue, keep a sheet of one-liners near your phone. Practice short answers to common questions with a friend—with a stopwatch. Know two or three short, compelling stories that make your case. Then cook them down and practice telling them.
- **REMEMBER, YOU NEED NOT TAKE A CALL WHEN IT COMES.** Often, reporters are on tight deadlines. But sometimes, you have plenty of time to prepare and call back. First, have whoever answers your phone find out who's calling, from which news organization, and if they're on deadline. If you feel it will help your presentation, ask if you can return the call at a specified time. Then, jot down a few notes based on a few talking points developed in advance and practice. Then, call the journalist back. If you're *really* convinced you're the wrong source, suggest an alternate.
- **DON'T USE JARGON.** Even with the reporter who knows your issues, steer clear of tech talk. It's stiff, turns off the uninformed, and is less likely to be quoted. Likewise, always spell out acronyms, and don't assume the friendly reporter you talked to a month ago remembers the buzzwords. Consider starting from square one unless you know and have spoken to the reporter previously. It's a good habit in any case, and usually generates more lively copy.
- **PREVIEW ONE OR TWO UPCOMING EVENTS OR ISSUES.** Take advantage of any interaction with a journalist and mention a story idea, an upcoming event, or a burning issue. Don't be shy. You may just stimulate the story of your dreams.
- **DROP A THANK-YOU NOTE.** Most reporters hear about their errors. Few get thanked for their accuracy and insight. Journalists have long memories. Especially when you're competing for scarce space, it helps to drop a note to a reporter who you feel "Gets it"—and his or her boss. You may be pleasantly surprised next time you call with a story idea.

Giving an Exclusive

You've probably heard about "exclusives" or "scoops" in the news business, but what is one and how can you use them?

An exclusive is when one media organization, such as a newspaper, is able to publish a news story with information that no one else has. News organizations love exclusive because it forces people to buy their paper or tune into their station for news they can't get anywhere else. You can love exclusives because news organizations generally give exclusive more space, and other news organizations will be scrambling to cover what they missed.

If you're a library in a two-newspaper town, like Seattle or Miami, you've probably heard a lot of competition between the papers. You're in an ideal situation to give an exclusive.

When you have newsworthy information that's not public (yet) and you're the only person who can (or will) make it public, you can give an exclusive. Exclusives are particularly helpful for you if: (1) you're afraid the story might get buried; or (2) you want to build a stronger relationship with a journalist.

To give an exclusive, approach a journalist you trust or with whom you want to build a stronger relationship with. When you begin discussing the story with the journalist, tell him or her you'd like to offer an exclusive. If it interests the journalist, you'll probably get better and stronger coverage.

Your obligation: you absolutely cannot tell another journalist about the news until that journalist's piece is public.

Conversely, a journalist may discover some news, or for other reasons, ask you for an exclusive. You're not obligated to do so. Besides, if the news is big enough, why only let one media outlet cover the piece when you could have two—or six—outlets covering it.

When weighing giving an exclusive, you should find out what you get in return for the exclusive. Front-page coverage? Top of the 6 o'clock news? Guaranteed coverage of your pet project in the *New York Times*? If the deal is good enough, go ahead. But be careful not to overuse exclusives. Sometimes, news is just news.

Hopping onto Trends

Everyone in the news business talks about trends. But they're not just talking about what your teenager is wearing this year. Trends influence what gets covered, and what doesn't.

Local journalists are interested in trends because they show that the news they're reporting isn't an isolated case—it's part of something bigger. National journalists love trends because it shows that it's not just happening in one place—it's affecting a lot of people.

How can you use trends as a hook for journalists? First, know what trends are happening. Your library may be facing budget cuts—libraries across the nation are facing library cuts. The story you pitch to your local journalist goes from "Our library is facing a \$200,000 budget cut this year" to "Our library is facing a \$200,000 budget cut this year, part of nationwide cutbacks that are costing libraries billions." The journalist may like the second pitch, because they're getting to report on something local with a national dimension.

Conversely, a national paper might cover some aspect of libraries, and you might have an example in your library. You can get coverage by riding on the trend. For example, *USA Today* might report that libraries are building coffee shops in their libraries to lure people back to the library from Barnes and Noble. You then might contact your local newspaper and point out the article. You could then say, "we've have a coffee shop in our library for four years." The newspaper likes the story because they can say, "Yesterday, *USA Today* reported an increase in coffee shops in libraries across the nation . . ."—the national look that journalists like—"Here in our town, the local library has had a coffee shop for four years." Suddenly, your old-news coffee shop is new news!

The American Library Association Public Information Office frequently uses trends to pitch national articles. National papers don't want to know just what's happening in New York or D.C., and often they don't really care what's happening in just Denver or Twin Falls, Idaho. But if something's happening in a dozen—or a hundred—towns, then it's a trend. And that makes it national news.

Dealing with Bad News

The following section was originally developed by Patricia Glass-Schuman (former ALA president) in ALA's Library Advocates Handbook.

Inevitably, all organizations have to deal with bad news. Budget cuts. Trimmed hours or closed branches. Parents who want to ban books from the library.

While bad news is never good, it can be turned into a positive media message. For example, when a teenage hacker crashed Seattle's King County Library System's computer system, closing the library down for three days, the story became the marvels of the technology rather than its failure, thanks to the library's quick and thoughtful response.

Some bad news you can see coming—budget cuts are generally in the works for weeks. Others, like crimes, cannot be anticipated. Either way, it's important for libraries to have a crisis communications plan.

Here is a link to the media relations page where you can find the document "How to Write a Crisis Communication Plan": www.ala.org/ala/pio/mediarelations/Default2270.htm

Here are a few tips for handling bad news:

- **DON'T OVERREACT.** If only one small paper carries the story, only respond to that paper. Don't send out a release to all your media contacts. If they don't know about the bad news, you probably don't want to tell them about it.
- **BE STRATEGIC.** If the news is huge, consider holding a press conference to communicate the facts, new developments, and the library's response or message. It will save you time and resource to hold one press conference rather than take a dozen individual interviews.
- **SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE.** The most common mistake in crisis communications is to have several spokespeople saying different things. Have one spokesperson, or make sure that all your spokespeople are saying the same thing.
- **UNDERSTAND INTERVIEW TOPICS AND FORMATS BEFORE ACCEPTING INTERVIEWS.** During these times, it is very important to be sure you understand the nature of a talk radio show or TV interview before you agree to go on. Don't speculate. Know who else will be on the show, if there will be call-ins, and what the host's position is before making a choice to go on. If you don't think you'll be giving a fair hearing, it might not be best to accept the interview.
- **FOCUS ON THE SOLUTION.** Explain how the library is going to address the situation or say that the library is looking for a speedy solution.
- **APOLOGIZE WHEN APPROPRIATE.** "We apologize for any inconvenience to our users. We are doing our best to . . ." Empathize. Convey caring and understanding.
- **HAVE ALL THE FACTS BEFORE RESPONDING.** Often, when news just breaks, not even the media has all the facts. Make sure you know exactly what is going on before responding to something that could just be a rumor or an exaggerated allegation.
- **PREPARE BRIEFING MATERIALS.** As soon as you can, have briefing materials for the media, with accurate facts included.
- **LET LAWYERS REVIEW STATEMENTS BEFORE RELEASING THEM.** If this situation has legal implications, make sure you consult with a lawyer before making a statement. Avoid "legalese," but make sure that what you're saying is ok to say.
- **STICK TO THE HIGH ROAD.** Avoid criticizing or getting personal with your opponents. Don't be defensive. Staying focused on your message and on the high road will ultimately be your best weapon.

V. Glossary

- AD RATES**—The rates charged by individual media outlets to advertise in their publication or on their station.
- ASSIGNMENT EDITOR**—Staff member of a television or radio news team responsible for judging appropriateness of story ideas assigned to reporter for coverage.
- BOILERPLATE**—A brief paragraph stating who you are, what you do, and how you do it, usually used as the last paragraph in a news release.
- B-ROLL**—Stock footage used by television news stations that includes background information for a story; b-roll is typically filmed using Beta instead of VHS because Beta is used by most TV stations due to its higher broadcast quality.
- BEAT**—The type of news covered by a particular reporter; such as education, health care, the environment, or city government.
- BRIDGING**—The process of answering an interviewer's question by transitioning it into a message that the interviewee wants to discuss.
- CLIP OR CLIPPING**—A story cut from a publication or a segment cut from a video or audiotape.
- EDITORIAL CALENDAR**—A calendar that lists specific topics that will be covered by a particular media outlet for each issue. Although developed with advertisers in mind, the calendar helps public relations practitioners plan their messages to fit within the general context of the piece.
- EDITOR'S NOTES**—Wording found in press releases and other materials that are not a part of the main message of the document, but serve to alert the media when they should release the information, where the story came from, where the document ends, and if it is continued on a second or third page.
- FACT SHEET**—One- or two-page document that describes an organization's principles, services, and philosophy. This includes the organization's address, telephone, fax, and e-mail as well as a map to provide reporters with information.
- FEATURE**—A long, probing article or story (as opposed to an "objective" news item or account). Magazines and newspapers may have a features department or desk.
- GRASSROOTS DISTRIBUTION**—Asking for help from volunteers and local community members for the distribution of flyers and brochures about events and organizations.
- HOOK**—The main news element of a story. Sometimes organizations look for hooks when attempting to increase their visibility by finding a connection between their spokesperson/organization director and the topic being discussed, and then contact the reporter to get them included in the story.
- LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**—Your opportunity to congratulate, discuss, or criticize an article you have read. These are submitted to print publications in a timely manner, are typically short, and refer to the original article that caused you to respond.
- MASTHEAD**—The list of editors, publishers, and senior reporters in each publication's issue—it includes an address and telephone number and can be found on the editorial page in newspapers and in a standard location in magazines.
- MEDIA LIST**—List of appropriate outlets to contact created for a specific organization or issue.
- NEWS PEGS**—Dates around which to pitch stories. These can be internal (Library Card Sign-Up Month) or external (Labor Day).
- PITCH LETTER**—Letter written to introduce a source and story idea to a member of the media.
- PITCHING**—Encouraging the media to report on a story; a pitch letter is often sent to media to spark their interest. However, pitching by telephone to follow-up is typically needed for a reporter to take notice.
- PRESS KIT**—A collection of related information to provide the media with background on a particular organization or event.
- PUBLICITY VALUE**—The unscientific approach to calculating the worthiness of the media's coverage. To calculate, multiply the price of a column-inch times the length of your story. For example, if the publication says that an ad costs \$100 per column inch and your story is seven inches long, the publicity value is \$700. Public relations-generated media coverage carries with it an implied third-party endorsement and added credibility since it is not a paid advertisement.

REACH—Geographic area of the audience and the number of readers/circulation, listeners, or viewers who can access the media in any region, city, or state where the publication or station is located.

ROUND-UP STORY—Story geared to look back at what has happened over a specific period of time, such as the previous year or quarter; a story in which a reporter typically wants several opinions on a subject.

SPIN—Jargon for the point of view or bias the source works to create a story.

SYNDICATED—Report that appears in more than one media outlet simultaneously, such as the “Dear Abby” column, or one written by a columnist for a specific newspaper or chain of papers.

WIRE SERVICE—Wire services should not be confused with wires (such as the Associated Press). Wire Services are a pay services, like PRNewswire, USNewswire, and HispanicNewswire, that allow you to post your press releases, and the services then mass distributes the press release to hundreds or thousands of journalists based on criteria you select. It’s a good way to get out national news to hundreds of outlets at a time—but it’s less effective for local news.

WIRES—Wires are independent news organizations that provide dispatches to multiple papers or broadcast organizations. Common services include the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Knight Ridder, and the United Press International (UPI).

VI. Key Library Editors

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