Good afternoon. I’m Rochelle Logan. And Douglas County Libraries is in Colorado—I think I probably left that off of my bio. We are just south of Denver, more or less half way between Denver and Colorado Springs. And it is one of the faster growing counties. It was the fastest growing county in the 1990 to 2000 census. And even then we almost doubled our population. And it is a very affluent community; it’s a bedroom community for Denver. We’ve been pretty much trying to keep up with the growth for 15, 20 years and we’re always looking to build the next library because you know, it’s a lot of fun actually to build libraries. And in the last Library Journal index, we were a four-star library and we’re very proud of that.

We’re funded on property tax mill levy. It’s local funding, pretty much across the board in Colorado. We don’t have a whole lot of state funding. And when we found that we once again needed not only a new library in Parker—Parker has a 20,000 square foot library and we have six branches. And Parker is one of our smaller branches and they’re serving more or less 80,000 people with 20,000 square feet; so we needed a new library. So we decided we needed to go out and ask for an increase on our mill levy, the property tax which would have amounted to the price of a hardback book for the average-sized house. So for the first mill levy, we hired a campaign manager and we did a survey. And they said, “You know, you pretty much have an easy time of it here. You’re probably going to win this, unless will library director pulls up to the library and fills his tank.” And I said, “Yeah, we have a gas pump.”

So we did just a top-down campaign. We had glossy mailings, the library directors and the senior administration all went out and talked to the rotaries and whoever wanted to listen to us. And this was in an off-year; it was in 2007 and in Douglas County we do all-mail voting. So as you might already know, by what I’ve just alluded to, we did not win that mill levy campaign. And we lost it by 210 votes. It was painful. And here was the big ah ha! moment for us when it comes to the topic of the day. We have 350 staff. That’s heads, not FTE’s. When we came back the next day and we realized if each person on our staff could have just
swayed one vote, we would have had it. And if any of you have ever run a campaign, you put your heart and soul into it and you think, “Oh, everybody loves libraries. This is going to be fine...” and you don’t win, it’s really painful. And the staff hurt, too.

So the next part of the story: we decided to go out again in 2008 because he thought, “It’s a presidential year, there’s going to be a lot more voters, it’s going to be a whole new story. We’re going to get staff involved.” And in Colorado, you have to be careful. And I know every state’s campaign laws are different. Colorado’s campaign laws are very tight about what you can say to staff once a campaign launches. So what we did is we collected everybody who wanted to be involved. We talked to them to send us their personal email addresses, we did as much information up front on that and it was a grass roots effort in each community. Each community came up to us and said, “You know what? You didn’t tailor this to my community. You need to tailor it to my community. You need to get your staff out talking to people.” And that’s what we did. We did much more talking to our staff about what the scripts are if it’s at the Highlands Library—not everybody votes for it if they don’t have a pony in the race. So if we’re building a Parker Library—“Why should you vote for a Parker Library?” So we made sure the staff knew I’m at the Highlands Ranch Library. You need to talk about the fact that we’re going to give you a new meeting room or an electronic classroom. Whatever it is, we want to be sure that the staff understand what the campaign is and why we are going out for it. So they are very informed. We gave them an elevator speech—if you can tell someone what it is as you’re going up in an elevator. It was essentially the cost of a hardback book, that if you will only vote for this $25 a year, you will get whatever it is at that library.

The school district was also running a campaign at the same time we were running ours this time and I’m sorry to say we didn’t win again. At the same time we were running the mill levy campaign, the OCLC came out with a study from awareness to funding. Yes. And probably a lot of you have heard about this study. And it essentially debunks the long-standing idea that if someone walks into your library, they are voting for you and the correlation is tenuous. I don’t know exactly what the correlation is, but you can’t assume if somebody is coming
to story time, that parent is not going to go and vote. There are barriers to voting. You have your super supporters—people that will always vote for you. You have probable supporters—and those are the people you need to target, the probables. They are maybe the people that are kid-driven, people who use the library’s office, people who believe in the greater good, people who are just coming in for fun, those are the probable supporters. But the one I wanted to emphasize today is the look to librarians, that there are people in that probable supporters, if you’re thinking about as a pyramid. Those people either respect the librarian or have a personal relationship with a librarian. So it’s Miss Julie who does that great puppet show on Thursday mornings and she’s been telling me how to teach my child with *Every Child Ready to Read Skills: The Six Skills for Literacy*.

So we’ve been telling our staff how important they are to this whole campaign. And now we have probably three years before we’re running out with another mill levy campaign, so we’ve got some time now to build a foundation. And we tell our staff that you should talk about what’s been transformative for you. For the OCLC study, they told us you should go from information to transformation—that the library is not nice to have, but a necessity. So talk about positioning the library as a vital part of the community. And everyone I know, if you talk to them, and say, “Do you have a library story? Was there something that transformed you?” And talk about that with your patron if you have a chance.

There’s lots of things you can talk about. And Camilla does have this 23 Advocacy Things for Frontline Employees that I found object her website. And there are things on here that we are going to start doing, Camilla. Knowing your library’s issues is what we’ve created on—making sure our staff know what our issues are. We train them on it, we put things on our staff exchange, we have what we call Rock Rally in Castle Rock, we have High Huddle in Highlands Ranch. Ten minutes before the library opens, each branch manager does their little, “This is what’s happening in the library today.” These are the things you should talk about if you have a chance. For instance, we just opened a brand new children’s area in one of our libraries. But we didn’t want people to think we have all this money to open a children’s area. So we said talk about the fact that we had a bequest from
a patron who made it possible to expand our library. So that was the message of the day. Those types of things our staff are comfortable with.

And Skip did talk about the shy library staff that they’re not always comfortable talking about something political. But they’ll be comfortable saying, “You know, I don’t know if you realize that the library has a GED program; we test here. We teach the GED program. We do citizenship; we help people get their citizenship.” Things like that.” It’s just those little things like Camilla said and those people go out and say, “You know I heard the library has GED testing. You can go to the library, it’s free.” It’s that type of thing that’s just invaluable. We offer staff who are shy the chance to do things like Twittering or Facebook. If they don’t want to be talking to people, then maybe they’re willing to be social networking and Facebook and YouTube.

We have quite a bit on our site, if you go to Douglas County Libraries, we have this new “It” campaign that I haven’t had time to tell you about. But it’s another thing that highlights the library staff. And each month we have somebody from our staff who’s highlighted and it’s cute things like ‘what would you bring with you on a desert island?’ We just put it out there so people get to know who our staff are. It’s just been a really fun trip. Some staff are not always willing or interested in talking to legislators, but when it comes to talking to their patrons, their parents, their businesspeople who come in and need help with ReferenceUSA, they’re willing to do that. And they’re willing to say just that one extra thing like, “You know I showed you ReferenceUSA, if you know any other businesses that could use this please pass the word. Here’s a brochure. Thank you very much.”