

Put Your Data to Work for Your Frontline Advocacy Team

Your data is only worth collecting if you use it effectively! How do you know what data will help you with your frontline advocacy message? Use this checklist as a guide.

The right data:

- ***Is easy to understand*** . No one wants to look at your spreadsheets. Take your data and boil it down to an easy-to-understand format. Make it clear almost at a glance. Is your student body growing? How many students and staff used your library this academic year? How does it compare to last year? What initiatives has the library undertaken to respond to changing focuses in higher education? How have staffing, technology and general operating costs changed as a result?
- ***Does not overwhelm the reader or listener***. Sometimes less is more. Making two or three points effectively is far better than trying to make six and watching the reader or listener lose interest.
- ***Clarifies the point you are making or the problem you are addressing*** . If you want to make the point that retaining Sunday evening library hours is critical, go to your data that shows how heavily your library is used (and by whom) by at time. If you need to add more journals to the selection you now offer, demonstrate the percentage of journals that are requested that are only available from other libraries, and the wait time for those. Remember, your data should relate *directly* to your message.
- ***Is relevant to the reader or listener*** . Some knowledge of your “audience” and their interests - whether they are users of your academic library, they’re other college or university staff, they’re friends, relatives or acquaintances - should guide the content of what you tell them.
- ***Shows the positive impact your academic library has on learning and research, on the university community and on the greater community***. If you want to make the point that most professors avail themselves of your services to put scarce materials on reserve for their students, and thus that the library saves money by not having to purchase additional copies, keep up with any information that will help you make that point. If you’re trying to increase the number of laptop computers available for student and staff checkout, keep tabs on actual checkouts vs. requests that have to be denied because all the laptops are out. Use those numbers to build your case.
- ***Is part of a bigger picture***. Do you want to talk about a national trend, such as the increase in distance learning and other technologically-driven innovations? Take the idea generated by the national trend and tell the story of one of your college’s out-of-town students who used your library remotely to research and write her doctoral thesis.