

Using Video in Your Advocacy Efforts

If a picture is worth a thousand words, what's a video clip worth? A million? Well, maybe not a million, but there's no doubt that a video clip of a well-respected local notable or celebrity speaking his or her message of advocacy for *your* library is a valuable thing indeed. It goes beyond a quote or a still photo and adds voice and gesture, both of which will reinforce the speaker's presence, passion and credibility as your spokesperson. It will bring your library a status that is really special.

You've read this already, but it bears repeating: If you want to ask a local notable or celebrity to be a visible advocacy spokesperson, the first thing to remember not to make a "cold" request. Instead, have the right person make the initial contact – someone who knows the celebrity or knows someone who does. The individual who makes the contact should ask about creating a short video (under 30 seconds) that will feature the local notable speaking his or her message of advocacy for your library. The person making the contact should tell the local notable why the library is asking for his or her help and explain how their support for your library will create a win-win situation for both the library and for the local notable. He or she should reassure the local notable that the library will do everything possible to make the videotaping smooth, quick and easy.

Let the individual you are soliciting know what specific kind of advocacy message you are trying to convey, then ask him or her to express that message in their own words. This allows your local notable to "own" the message because the words he or she uses will reflect his or her unique style and personality. Every time you engage your local notable's personal message into your advocacy effort, you end up with a product that feels personal and genuine.

If the notable says, "Certainly!" and a video session must be scheduled, that task can be assigned to the library director or manager, or another member of the library's staff, who can work out the details with the local notable. The best place to shoot video is at the library, so that your background clearly identifies the location. However, if it's inconvenient for your celebrity spokesperson to come to the library for this purpose, library staff should work out alternative arrangements that fit the individual's schedule.

Work out all the details ahead of time. Where will the video recording take place? How long will it take? What is the content of the message do you want the local notable to deliver? Will he or she simply speak into the camera, or will someone ask them a question to which they will respond? Know exactly what you are going to do before you ever turn your camcorder on.

What will you need to do a good job? Good light, a quiet background, and a simple mini video camcorder will do the trick. Mini cameras are easily available at electronics and discount stores for under \$100, some for under \$60. Purchase one and use it to shoot video and sound. You'll be surprised at how often you're glad that it's handy to grab when video opportunities arise at your library. Once you have recorded your local notable's video message, post it on your library's website.

- Follow that with a press release to local media, alerting them to this new advocacy initiative and directing their readers to your library's website.
- Include a link to your library's website on its Facebook. This will allow your Facebook readers to click there and go directly to your local notable's video and advocacy message.
- Tweet about it! Use your 140 characters to entice readers to visit your library's website and watch the video.
- If your library has a marketing/PR budget, check with your local cable news station or with freelance videographers to see how much it will cost to have professional-quality video shot. Click on the above link again and check out two professionally-shot 30-second advocacy videos created by the Saint Paul Public Library. These were developed to air on television and on the library's website. They feature local actor Bee Vang, costar of Clint Eastwood's 2008 film *Gran Torino* and Vineeta Sawkar, KSTP television news anchor, each sharing engaging, informative messages in support of their local library.