



From Advocate to Activist

Nebraska Library Association
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EveryLibrary



EveryLibrary | 501(c)4 Political Action Committee

- Election Days and Negotiations
- Support for Legislative Agendas
- Outreach and Activism to the Public



EveryLibrary Institute - 501(c)3 Research and Policy Think Tank

- Research Agenda
- Training Programs
- Programmatic Partnerships and Coalitions



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Theory and Practice

Theory of Advocacy

If your advocacy framework assumes an adversarial situation then you have a real problem.

- Education
 - What are libraries capable of today?
- Orientation
 - Who are librarians and library workers today?
- Ideation
 - What could a shared solution look like?
- Identification
 - What resources do we need in place to authentically collaborate?
- Activation
 - When will we both commit to a collaboration?

Advocacy is....

A process that creates partnerships and coalitions around a common cause or concern.

Advocacy is a long-game.

It is focused on building relationships through an understanding a shared-values framework, purposefully aligning missions, and finding ways to realize a common vision for either people or a place.

Theory of Activism

If you are not willing to be focused on your own self interest and use an active voice, all you are is hopeful.

- Based in Shared Values
 - It affirms or offends a belief
- Focused on Shared Identity
 - It builds community
- Has Integrity
 - It is honest in its motivation and authentic in its goals
- Directs Activity
 - It uses verbs and speaks in the first person
- Organizes Supporters
 - It identifies, cultivates, and empowers

Activism is....

Strident actions that ask for -
and expect - a change.

Activism is short but frequent values-system-focused and identity-focused messages that are intended to move people who are otherwise unaware or inactive about an issue or idea into a close personal alignment and identification with an an ideal.



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Political Frames

Funding for libraries is a political decision.

Directly or indirectly, how we choose to tax ourselves and what values are expressed in our budgets, policies, and programs are fundamentally political in nature.

Political Decisions

Three Political Narratives

- Progressives
- Conservatives
- Libertarians

"Three Languages of Politics" by Arnold Kling

*The stories we like
to tell ourselves*

My heroes are people who have stood up for the *underprivileged*.

The people I cannot stand are the people who are *indifferent* to the oppression of women, minorities, and the poor.

Progressive

My heroes are people who have stood up for *Western values*.

The people I cannot stand are the people who are *indifferent* to the assault on the moral virtues and traditions that are the foundation for our civilization.

Conservative

My heroes are people who have stood up for *individual rights*.

The people I cannot stand are the people who are *indifferent* to government taking away people's ability to make their own choices.

Libertarian

What happens when you are variant from or at odds with your audience, your funding partner, or your decision-maker?

You and your team

vs.

you and your audience



A Pause for Questions, Comments, etc...

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Supporters and Partners

How people are wired
makes all the difference in
your messaging and
approach

How people listen

Four ways that people are wired to care about... anything.

- Compassionately Engaged
 - Populations and people
- Pride of Place
 - Interesting, thriving, and prosperous
- The Data Shows It
 - Data about outcomes as lens
- Concerned or Fearful
 - Focused on filling gaps

Why people listen

Four factors that build parties and movements

“The Political Brain”
by Drew Westin (2008)

- Shared Values
 - Does the campaign or candidate align with my deeply-held belief(s)?
- Shared Identity
 - Does the campaign or candidate represent me in some way?
- Personal Characteristics
 - Do I like the candidate or admire the campaign?
- Specific Policies
 - Will the candidate or campaign do what it says when I am not looking?

Who are the Allies of Activists?

Why someone is motivated to act on behalf of an ideal

- Relational Supporters
 - “Knows” libraries and librarians
- Ideological Supporters
 - Aligned with what librarians and library workers do
- Aversion Supporters
 - Would like to avoid bad outcomes based on principals or ideals
- Access Supporters
 - Motivated by feedback, praise, or gratitude

Stories that Resonate

Four potential approaches to
root your campaign

- Stories of Success demonstrate your competency
 - Scale or replicate
- Stories of Failure demonstrate your integrity
 - Avert or fix
- Stories about people you care about
 - Find a common concern
- Stories about why you do what you do
 - Find a common cause

The Activist's Playbook



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Activist's Guiding Principles

- Must focus on identifying, cultivating, and empowering supporters
- Must not focus on building users
- Must ask for and allow actions
- Must allow people to participate as donors, volunteers, and do-ers

Users are not necessarily supporters and supporters don't need to be users.

Guiding Principles for Activists

- Collect Contact Information
- Create Pathways to Involvement
- Be Authentic
- Be Urgent
- Segment Your Audiences
- Ask Questions of Your Base
- Stay on Message

Activism That Works

The “Ladder of Engagement”

Unaware → Observing

Observing → Supportive

Supportive → Activist

*Moving People
Into Action*

- People have one of three budgets to spend:
 - Money
 - Time
 - Good Name
- Marketing or advertising is marketing or advertising
- If it does not have an ask it is advertising not activism

*Understanding
the Critical
Differences*

Guiding Principles

- Collect Contact Information
- Create Pathways to Involvement
- Be Authentic
- Be Urgent
- Ask Questions of Your Base
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- Segment Your Audiences

Activism That Works

Library → Issue → (potential) Activist

*Segment Your
Audiences*

- AtoZ Databases and ReferenceUSA
- Facebook and other social media
- Analytics on Demand, Orange Boy
“look alike”
- Social Hacking
- Borrow
- Build

A Like or Share is Not an Activist

*Find More
Audiences*

HOW: Compassion, Pride, Concern

WHY: Shared Values, Shared ID, Policy

WHO: Relationship, Ideology, Aversionary

WHAT: Extend Success, Fix Failure

*Focus Your
Message and
Differentiate Your
Messages*

HOW: Compassion, **Pride**, Concern

WHY: Shared Values, Shared ID, Policy

WHO: Relationship, Ideology, **Aversionary**

WHAT: Extend Success, **Fix Failure**

*Focus Your
Message*



A Pause for Questions, Comments, etc...

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Advocacy Principles

- “Marketing Tomorrow” build use
- “Marketing Yesterday” builds support
- Programmatic Partners are unactivated allies
- Coalitions are core to advocacy campaigns
- You are the only expert on libraries and librarianship and you must define the negative
- No one will solve your budget or policy issue for you

Advocacy Principles

- Marketing *tomorrow* to encourage use and uptake.
- Marketing *yesterday* to tell the story of your impact.
- Spend a few dollars and a few minutes every day to do it.

Marketing

Funding-Focused Partnerships and Coalitions are based on:

- Shared Values
- Common Mission
- Aligned Vision

*Coalitions are
Focused on
Funding or Policy
Not Programming
or Services*

- Economic Development
- Workforce and Re-tooling
- Early Childhood and Grade Level Reading
- COVID-Slide
- Housing and Food Security
- Safety and Violence
- Well-being

Who Else Cares?

Your “Book” Carries Your Values,
Vision, Mission:

- Strategic Plan
- Building Plan
- Technology Plan
- Budget
- Annual Report

*Coalition 101:
Boards*

Empowering Staff to Carry the Message:

- Your own values about libraries?
- Your own vision for your community?
- Why you do this work?
- What happens if you don't?

*Coalition 101:
Staff*

Talk about Plan B and Plan A

- Plan A = what happens if we are properly funded or empowered
- Plan B = what happens if we are under-funded or disempowered

Then please stick to it.

*Experts Must
Define the
Positive and the
Negative*

New Money only comes from four places: Reallocations, Outside Aid, New Taxes, or Cuts

New Policy or Legislation is introduced by an elected official but written by engaged stakeholders

Rewrite the Budget

Write the Bill



Taking Inventory

How to put this into practice

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- During the ongoing COVID crisis, policymakers, elected officials, voters, and philanthropic funders want to see their money go to effective programs and competent staffing in ways that deliver results.
- They want to support programs and projects that can be measured and justified through data as well as stories.
- They are looking for the right way to apply funding and resources - whether taxes or philanthropy or grants - to solve problems.

What Funders Want Now

- “Third-Place” narratives are very difficult during COVID.
- Virtual, Digital, and Online measures of impact are needed.
- ‘Nice to have’ features or services vs. ‘Must Haves’
- New revenue is needed.

Disrupted Advocacy

- Every other agency in town has a great story to tell about Pivoting during COVID.
- You don't get any bonus points for being there.
- Your internal difficulties are lost in the noise.

*It's Not about
the Pivot*

- Austerity mindsets lag economic growth
- Highly volatile budget situations lead to conservative spending plans
- The “One Time Money” excuse
- The budget needs to be re-written by the experts

Disrupted Budgets

What are the agendas of your elected officials and voters - and how does your library map to those agendas?

- Interesting Places
- Thriving Places
- Prosperous Places
- Avoid Duplicative Services
- Deliver Efficient and Effective Services

*Understanding
Your Boss's
Agenda*



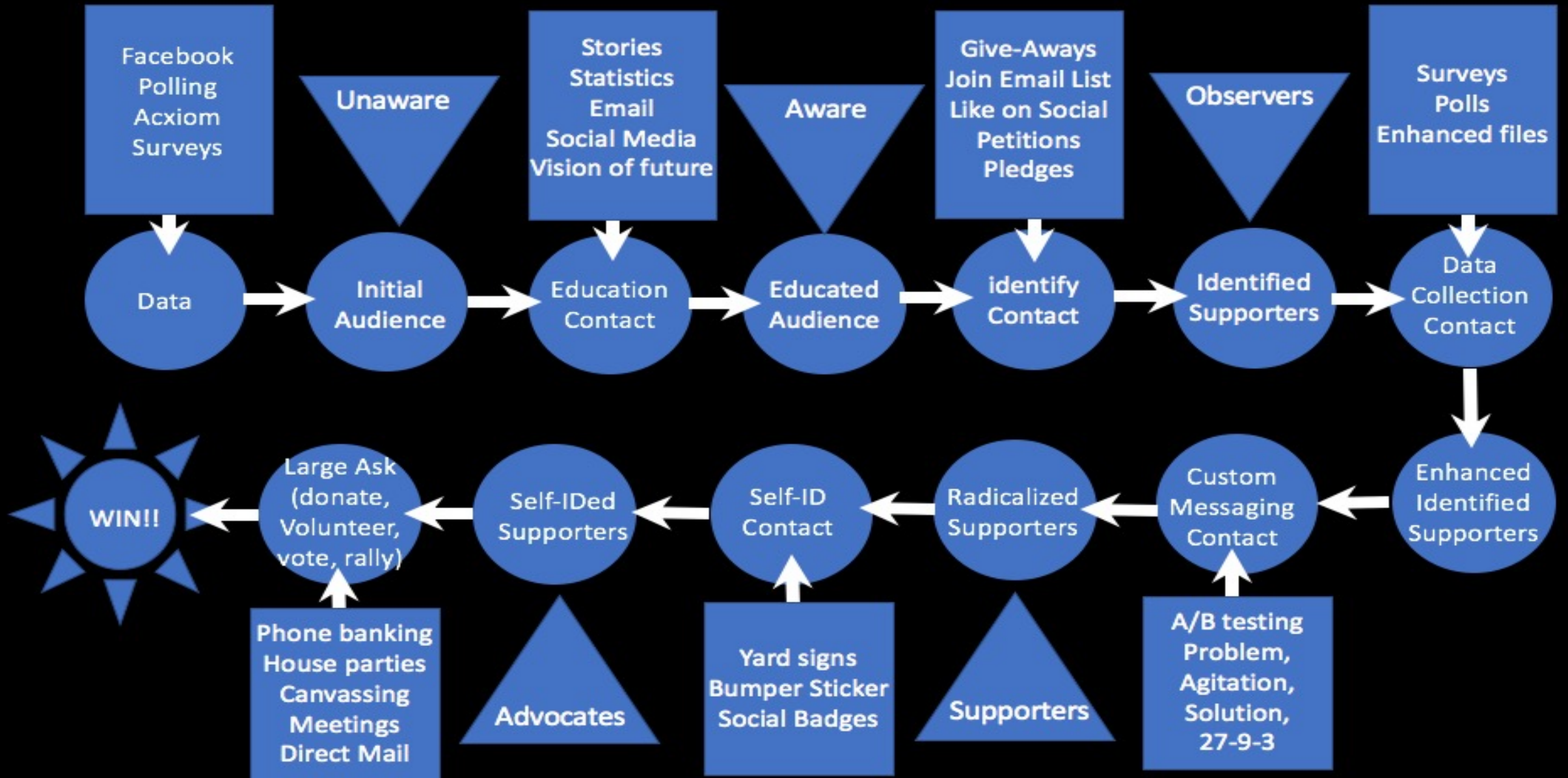
Questions, Comments, and Wrap-Up

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AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT ROADMAP





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