



Illinois Library Association

A large, stylized rainbow graphic composed of concentric, semi-circular bands in shades of red, orange, yellow, and green, positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page.

**READY SET  
ADVOCATE**

**Library Advocacy Tool Kit**



# Building Your Advocacy Network

## Staff and Volunteers

Whether directors, managers, frontline, back-room, full-time, part-time, or volunteers, the people who work in libraries can be your most effective advocates. Effective staff and volunteer advocates:

- Understand their library and their community
- Know the mission of the library and its goals
- Know what services the library is offering
- Know what is happening in the library and in other departments
- Get engaged when they are offered advocacy training opportunities
- Understand and can communicate the library's issues and message
- Understand the difference between advocacy and lobbying

## Frontline Workers Are Key Advocates!

Frontline workers are those who directly interact with customers. In libraries, frontline workers include the circulation desk attendants, greeters, reference librarians, children's and teen librarians, program planners, outreach staff, and more. While the library director and department heads play critical roles in library advocacy, it is the frontline workers who see library users every day and interact with them on a much more personal level.

Frontline employees also tend to live in the community where they work. They use the local grocery stores, attend the local churches, their children are in the local schools, and they interact with their neighbors, who are more than likely to be local library card holders. They are often lifelong residents and know their community from the ground up.

If you are a frontline staff member, you have an important role to play in advocating for your library. You should not only be aware of what is happening in your library, you should be talking about why your library is so important in your community!

How do you become a more effective frontline advocate?

- Understand your library, know the mission of the library, know what the services are, and what is happening at all times.
- Familiarize yourself with what is happening in the other departments of your library. Maybe attend some of the library programs. Ask if you can assist with programs or outreach programs.
- Make sure you read the library's e-news, website, and internal messages, and stay engaged.
- Ask how you can be a voice for your library. See if you can take some training to help you learn how to be a library advocate.
- Let your supervisor know you want to help promote what is happening in the library and that you want to be an advocate for the library.





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## Library Friends

Every library of every type should think about forming a Library Friends group. Learn more about Friends groups at United for Libraries, a division of ALA, at [www.ala.org/united/friends/factsheets](http://www.ala.org/united/friends/factsheets). This includes not only public libraries; school, academic, and special libraries can all have effective Friends groups. It is always heartening to discover how many people really love the library, and are ready to help you spread the message. An active Friends group is a huge advocacy asset.

## Community Groups and Community Members

No matter what type of library you're involved with, you operate within a "community," whether it's a geographic area such as a municipality, a school district and its students, a college or university community, or a parent institution. Within these communities, population segments can easily be identified.

Sharing your library's message with community members can involve in-person conversations, mailings and newsletters, local media, and social media. The goal is to use multiple channels and to match your delivery mechanism with your audience. You should also be engaging your community through open forums, programs, and social events that provide an opportunity to talk about the library and its message.

And remember...You are not alone! Here are some of the groups that can be part of your support/advocacy network:

- Teachers
- Faculty
- Parent groups
- Students
- Service organizations
- Community leaders
- Chamber of Commerce members
- Who else??