



Illinois Library Association



Library Advocacy Tool Kit



Telling Your Library Stories

As all great communicators understand, it is the specific story—backed by data—that drives home the point. It is the specific stories that dramatically illustrate what statistics only suggest.

Remember...

The best advocates for change are those people who can tell a story that moves people to action... and you are the one who knows those stories best.

But capturing these stories is not always easy. For the most part, library staff may not be aware of the true impact of the services they provide. Whether they are children, students, parents, businesspeople, or the elderly, libraries have a profound impact on the lives of community members.

What are the components of a compelling library story?

- A problem
- A library intervention
- A happy ending
- One fact
- A real person
- A “phrase that pays”

The good news is that there are hundreds and hundreds of these real stories out there. The trick is to get library users to share those stories with you.

How can you get users to share their stories with you? Libraries can make this easier in a number of ways. Make it a practice to:

- Have a place for library patrons to write, text, or email their library experience
- Learn how to capture stories yourself: Don't be afraid to ask!
- Ask people to share or take photos (with permission)
- Post stories and photos on social media (again, with permission)

With a little practice, your users will appreciate the opportunity to talk about the ways in which the library is impacting their lives. And, you will have a growing array of stories you can use to dramatically illustrate the real impact your library has on real people.

The Reaching Across Illinois Library System, and the Illinois Heartland Library System have pages where you can share library stories—and see what stories other libraries have collected. ILA and the American Library Association always need stories that can show elected officials at the state and federal level how libraries are impacting people's lives. Many millions of dollars in local, state, and federal support have been secured because of the stories that you can tell.