



Illinois Library Association

A large, stylized rainbow graphic composed of concentric, semi-circular bands in a gradient of colors from red to yellow to green. The rainbow is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page.

**READY SET
ADVOCATE**

Library Advocacy Tool Kit



Your Library Message

Whether communicating with the public, with media, with library users, with community leaders, or with elected officials, it is important to communicate a clear, consistent, and concise message. If you work at a library or serve on a library board, what is your library all about? How are you making a difference in your community and in people's lives? If you're a library user or supporter, what makes the library important to you?

The "Big Picture"

This message needs to focus on the big picture, but also on the specifics within your community. Some "big picture" messages are shared by all libraries and are the focus of national and statewide public awareness campaigns. Some of them are:

- Libraries transform lives
- Libraries transform communities
- Libraries are essential to lifelong learning
- Libraries are a smart investment—and an incredible value for your tax dollar

A number of other "big picture" messages relate to the current economic and pandemic situation:

- Libraries are first responders for those needing information and assistance
- Libraries are vital to a robust recovery
- Libraries are "bigger than a building"

ILA has developed a series of "Bigger than a Building" talking points that can be used to illustrate how the value of libraries extends far beyond in-building use. These have been particularly valuable messages during the pandemic, with many libraries able to provide only limited in-building access. These messages may be found at www.ila.org/advocacy/bigger-than-a-building.

A number of resources exist for those working on messages that are specific to various types of libraries: public, school, academic and special. A good Illinois example is the "My Library Is..." project, featuring messages developed by RAILS and IHLS members. These may be found at www.mylibraryis.org.

Your Local Library Message

Within these broad messages, you need to think about your local library message:

- What is unique and special about your library?
- What are your local library's issues?
- How is the library making a difference in your community?
- How has the library served the community during the pandemic, with many traditional services disrupted?
- How will your library help drive the recovery?

Your message is also important if you are looking to achieve specific goals of service improvement:

- What are your goals and plans?
- Are you looking to add services, hours?
- Are you looking to expand or renovate?
- How will these plans make a difference in the community and in people's lives? If you are a library user, how will these plans make a difference to YOU?

All of these messages need to be carefully crafted, concise, and widely shared so that community members and community leaders understand your library's value—and goals.