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While concerns about cutting funds to school libraries have been expressed for many years, little investigation has been done into what techniques are effective in reversing this trend. This paper reviews the empirical research from several disciplines as it applies to the question of how school library funding can be positively affected. The results indicate that teacher-librarians can positively use the principles of interpersonal influence to create effective relationships with decision-makers that may in turn impact funding. This paper is one of the first to review the empirical literature on techniques designed to garner support for school libraries.

Introduction

Though not exclusive to school libraries, concerns about cutting funding to libraries have been common in the popular media in the past few years. For example, during the past few months alone, the American Library Association has given extensive attention to funding issues for school libraries and the need for all types of librarians to be concerned, and to advocate for same.

Despite these reports, few research studies have looked at the context for decisions regarding library funding, and only recently has the construct of interpersonal influence been explored in the decision-making process. However, when these studies are considered in conjunction with evidence from other relevant fields such as public administration, social psychology and economics, patterns begin to emerge.

School library stakeholders have participated in advocacy activities extensively over the past decade (Ewbank & Kwon, 2015). At the local level, staff, users and other interested supporters of school libraries have devoted time and effort in advocating for strengthened library services. These efforts are not being carried out in vain. As worldwide economic woes continue to plague governments and businesses, the risk of decreased library budgets remains high.

Given this context, the research question this paper seeks to answer is: “Can literature from the domains of public administration, social psychology, economics, and librarianship provide
The definition of advocacy varies little from one library association to another with most emphasizing the notion of librarians and other concerned stakeholders (such as library trustees, library users, senior managers, and other supporters) influencing a decision-maker or decision-making body to alter a view and subsequent actions to positively support libraries (Ewing, 2011). According to Nicholson-Crotty (2005), “…advocacy can include public education, public relations, research, mobilization efforts, agenda setting, lobbying, monitoring legislative or bureaucratic activity…” (p. 114).

For the purposes of this review, the following definition is used: Advocacy is a planned, deliberate, sustained effort to develop understanding and support incrementally over time (Haycock, 2006). It is worth noting that advocacy in the not-for-profit sector is being redefined for boards from advocacy as a role, to developing sustainable resources such that the organization can achieve its mission; advocacy is thus a means, not an end. In this context it goes far beyond public relations and raising awareness.

The Context of Research/Evidence

Many reports of advocacy efforts appear in the literature – few are evidence based. The body of work describing studies that attempt to measure the efficacy of advocacy techniques is scarce, regardless of discipline, profession or service, though the work done in other disciplines can help inform this challenge as well as strengthen the conclusions drawn from library-based studies.

This review brings together studies examining various aspects of the advocacy process in the library sector and lays a foundation for influencing budgetary decision-making by exploring relevant key works in other disciplines. The findings show salient themes are present across these bodies of literature and those techniques appearing most effective are supported by evidence.

There are so many reports of actions taken by library stakeholders in North America and other regions globally that it would be difficult to create an exhaustive list. The authors of many of these reports declare that the survival of the library as an institution depends on library staff informing the public about library services (see for example: Chamberlain, 2009; Maxwell, 2008; Moorman, 2009; Richards, 2009). Others suggest that direct lobbying, particularly through the development of strong relationships with decision-makers, can be effective in influencing funding decisions (see for example: Brey-Casiano, 2006; Chamberlain, 2009; Moorman, 2009; Storey, 2010).

There are few evidence-based studies focusing on libraries in the political sphere, and even fewer that touch specifically on budgets. A small handful of studies have been carried out in the U.S. and Canada. In the global literature, there has been some interest in the comparison of elected officials’ and senior administrators’ perceptions of public and academic libraries to those of librarians and other library stakeholders. A recent review of school library advocacy efforts reveals just one empirical study published between 2001 and 2011 (Ewbank & Kwon, 2015).
The relevant studies reported here include evidence-based studies only and exclude opinion pieces and editorials, as well as reports of non-funding policy advancement, such as copyright legislation, media policy or intellectual freedom. The process employed to complete the literature searches used terms selected from each database’s distinct controlled vocabularies as well as through broader keyword searches. No temporal limits were set. It is illustrative to include as well those studies that examine municipal services, including libraries, and academic units. Studies are included from public education where relevant.

**Plans Versus Outcome**

Reports of actions planned, or undertaken, appear frequently in the professional literature and popular media. A cursory search of popular databases with Library and Information Science citations, including Academic Search Premier, Library Literature and Information Science Full Text, Emerald Management Xtra, ABI/Inform, ProQuest Dissertation and Theses and Australian Digital Theses, with “libraries” and “advocacy” as subject terms, yielded over 200 results at the time of writing. The prevailing goal of these reports remains to report on and describe individual instances where advocacy efforts were undertaken. While these reports often conclude that the efforts were successful, little work has been done to measure the effectiveness of the techniques employed. An example from the state of Kentucky reveals that a wide-scale public library advocacy campaign using billboards and other forms of advertising was labelled “successful” (Gibbons, 2009), yet state and federal funding for public libraries in Kentucky has been decreasing over the past several years (Kentucky, 2009).

In recent decades, a handful of studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of specific advocacy techniques employed in a variety of settings. While the number of studies is small, the growing body of evidence in this area can help inform the strategies that teacher-librarians, principals, governing boards, associations and others, devise in order to stimulate support and increased, or at least maintenance, funding for library services. Many of these are from the academic and public sectors but nevertheless illustrate successful approaches. Those familiar with the school library setting will see similarities. Focus is then placed on the school library community itself.

**Social Conditions**

The culture of the country has been considered when looking at library funding. In the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, ranking high in generalized trust (i.e., “trust towards diverse others, people of different age, class, gender, race and ethnicity,” Varheim, Steinmo & Ide, 2008, p. 878), public libraries’ budgets fared better than those at the bottom of the scale. Through the creation of welcoming spaces for diverse groups, libraries contribute to community building, a key factor in the development of generalized trust (Varheim et al., 2008).

External factors like local socio-economic and educational levels of the community have also been found to correlate to higher levels of funding than any political pressure exerted by trustees or staff (Blake, 1988). Historic, social and political values are more relevant to decision-makers than the effectiveness of library programs or pressure from library stakeholders.
(Hubbard, 1996). These external social factors thus create a competitive environment in which decision-makers operate.

**Demand on Services**

The theory of public choice, which suggests demand (high use) results in increased funding, has been considered when looking at successful bids to increase funding (Allen, 2003). This economic theory has not been useful when looking at public libraries; increased use does not correlate to increased funding.

**Attitudes and Behaviors**

Library funding has not been immune to budget scrutiny undertaken at higher levels, whether in a public or academic setting (Hunt, 1993; Stenstrom, 2012) and the modes and means used to engage decision-makers are key. While the library director and board (in the case of public libraries) may be able to engage in positive relationships with those setting funding levels, administrative staff, budget committee members, and elected officials remain the most prominent players in the process, and therefore, the most influential in funding and budget decisions (Estabrook & Lanker, 1995; Gillespie, 1980; McCargar, 1984).

**Decision Making in Context**

Decision-makers tend to rely on three heuristics: representativeness, availability, and anchoring. In the first instance, decision-makers incorporate previous knowledge and experience to create a more complete profile of situations lacking in sufficient detail. In other words, they may use positive experiences or they may use stereotypes of people or situations to fill in gaps in information. Further, providing information that runs counter to a decision-maker’s beliefs and attitudes or subjective norms can border on useless. Representativeness can also be demonstrated when decision-makers make predictions about performance; current performance influences the decision-maker’s view of future performance, regardless of the likelihood of new factors being introduced (Tversky & Kahneman, 1982). One might reasonably conclude that lack of experience working with a teacher-librarian, or a negative experience in the past, can create obstacles to successful advocacy, as can misperceptions of the ubiquity and low cost of credible information for student learning.

When considering a shift in attitude, it is worth noting that peripheral cues, such as credibility or physical attractiveness, have a greater impact when motivation and/or ability to scrutinize the central merits of a product or idea are low or when attitudes cannot be based on central merit. Creating an interesting paradox, when messages presented to shift an attitude come from a liked or trusted source, the message itself is scrutinized less, unless the message is ambiguous. Further, prior knowledge of an issue or object reduces a decision-maker’s need for additional information (Petty et al., 1997).

Some of the findings of OCLC’s *From Awareness to Funding* study (2008) demonstrate the importance of trust as well. While some of the findings weren’t surprising, others were counter intuitive. For example, support is not necessarily linked to use – super-supporters (highest group) actually used library services less than the next highest group (probable supporters) and
demographics made no significant difference. Respondents overwhelmingly associated the library with the provision of information. However, there are other organizations crowding that market. And, in fact, one subgroup of the least supportive segment (barriers to support) was labeled the ‘web wins’ segment.

Library support then is an attitude, but funding is a behavior. Attitudes and behaviors are not always related. So general support may not translate into action. The study recommends working on the two most favorably inclined groups, the super supporters and the probable supporters, to move them to actions.

**The School Library Environment**

Although the findings and conclusions described in this paper cross-library environments, institutional contexts and different priorities make each situation unique.

The personal values of the decision-maker are the most salient factor in determining school library funding (Bailey, 2007). School librarians perceive the most effective method of advocacy as providing comments directly to decision-makers such as school district administrators, school board members, and legislators (Ewbank, 2011).

Classic lobbying techniques, such as contacting decision makers directly and specifying the effect of legislative decisions regarding public schools, have been confirmed to be the most effective from the perspective of elected officials, though “if a lobbyist has more experiences with a legislator, it is likely the legislator will have more favorable perceptions of the lobbying methods used by the lobbyist” (Rollins, 2006, p. xiii).

Caution must be taken when the perception of the values of lobbyists differs from those of the decision maker. The role of social networks in decisions on funding for education at the state level has been explored and the perception of the school lobbyist can have a detrimental effect in forwarding requests for increased school funding (Winton-Glisson, 2006). In this case, a lack of credibility may have a detrimental effect.

**Evidence**

Paradoxically, no sector in the library community has more evidentiary support for meeting the funder’s mission than school libraries, while no sector has suffered from greater decline in support across the continent. The purpose of this paper is not to address the research evidence for support for different types of libraries; suffice to say, there is ample.

In the school library setting, research has been funded and undertaken by library associations, school library associations, state agencies, independent researchers, and published in peer-reviewed journals. One might argue that the recent impetus began twenty years ago with the “Colorado” studies, undertaken by the Library Research Service, a unit of the Colorado State Library and the Colorado Department of Education. There was a correlation between staffed, stocked school libraries and student achievement. Funding and support has thereafter declined in Colorado.

These studies have been replicated in several states. Perhaps more importantly, different approaches by different researchers have reached similar conclusions. In one case, the results
were even controlled for individual school-level funding, and the results were the same (Haycock, 2011).

A key component of the evidence is often overlooked, however. It is not the presence of school libraries that affect student achievement; rather it is the presence and specific behaviors of a qualified teacher-librarian. Advocates need to address whether the strategies and tool kits are helpful if the behaviors are not practiced. In other words, specific behaviors (e.g., collaboration and informal staff development with colleagues) affect student achievement and coincidentally affect principal perceptions, yet these are not foremost in messaging or in models.

In addition, evidence from the school library sector suggests that professional associations emphasize professional development and training in areas not aligned with this clear impact on achievement, such as collaboration with colleagues around teaching and learning (Moreillon, Cahill, & McKee, 2012).

The issue is not the evidence. The issue is not the volume of the message. The issue is the connection between the advocate and the target, and changing positive attitudes into behaviors. The school library community also provides evidence of avoiding advocacy as the “planned, deliberate, sustained effort to develop understanding and support incrementally over time” (Haycock, 2006). In 1999 the American Association of School Librarians developed a comprehensive advocacy program with a marketing consultant; it was endorsed by all 50 school library media associations (Haycock & Cavill, 1999); within two years it was quietly abandoned without discussion or evaluation in favor of a brochure mailed to school principals.

**Decision Makers**

Funding decisions for school libraries are made at the local level by school principals, then by superintendents and school boards, through state departments of education (senior bureaucrats and legislators) and the federal Department of Education (senior bureaucrats and legislators). Obviously Congress plays a role in shaping policy and allocating funding, through direction to the Department of Education. The question then arises as to who shapes the influencers. Clearly teachers and parents can be significant players. A recent library media highlight was the story of the “Spokane moms” who fought the legislature and won (Whelan, 2008).

The challenge is that those working in school libraries not be seen as advocating solely for their jobs, a position difficult to avoid. This is the recurring problem of perceived self-interest.

**What Works**

Two salient patterns emerge from a synthesis of the literature. The first is grounded in the notion that circumstances significant for each library and related advocacy needs are inherently local. The process and actors that should be strategically targeted vary from one campaign to another.

The individual nature of each situation establishes the base for the second emergent theme, which is that the development of personal relationships with decision makers on an individual basis is key to forwarding messages about library services effectively.
The presence of an existing relationship between library stakeholders and decision makers strengthens the chances that information critical to understanding the case for supporting libraries can be effectively conveyed (Estabrook & Lanker, 1995; McClure, Feldman & Ryan, 2007; Rollins, 2006; Shavit, 1985; Stenstrom, 2012; Ward, 2004). When these messages intersect with decision makers' personal values or the values of their parent organization, the circumstances for positive support are further strengthened (Blake, 1988; Bailey, 2007; Church, 2008; DeRosa & Johnson, 2008; Hubbard, 1996; Mash, 2008; Stenstrom, 2012; Varheim, Steinmo & Ide, 2008).

The Role of Influence

It has been suggested that senior library managers could benefit from learning from the literature on influence (Gwyer, 2009). The facets of influence are numerous, as are the tactics which have been shown to be effective in particular contexts. The facets considered here include the role of reputation, small-group influence, and the role of personal and institutional values. This is followed by an introduction to a number of tactics.

An organization’s reputation can be affected from both the perception of external observers on its ability to deliver value or quality goods and services, and from the opinions of other high-profile stakeholders who themselves influence the observer. In a meta-analysis of literature on influence, it was concluded “unambiguously that a favourable organizational reputation is associated with economic benefits....” (p. 1033) and that these opinions form the basis of the organization’s prominence (Rindova et al., 2005). The effectiveness of each tactic depends on a complex set of factors and is context dependent (Koslowsky & Schwarzwald, 1993; Raven, 1990; Yukl, Chavez & Seifert, 2005).

It Is Also Important To Be Liked...

Research by Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman (Cuddy, Kohut, & Neffinger, 2013) found in a study of 51,836 leaders, only 27 of them were rated in the bottom quartile in terms of likability and in the top quartile in terms of overall leadership effectiveness—in other words, the chances that a manager who is strongly disliked will be considered a good leader are only about one in 2,000. A growing body of research (Cuddy, Kohut, & Neffinger, 2013) suggests that the way to influence—and to lead—is to begin with warmth. “Warmth is the conduit of influence: It facilitates trust and the communication and absorption of ideas. Even a few small nonverbal signals—a nod, a smile, an open gesture—can show people that you’re pleased to be in their company and attentive to their concerns. Prioritizing warmth helps you connect immediately with those around you, demonstrating that you hear them, understand them, and can be trusted by them.”

Principles of Persuasion

It is useful in considering the above evidence to apply the framework of influence developed by Robert Cialdini (2007, 2009). This framework considers both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in its description as well as suitability for analysis in cases encompassing elements of upward, downward and lateral appeal.
Cialdini’s framework, the Six Principles of Influence, has been applied in several contexts over the past thirty years (the first book edition of his work appeared in 1984) but only recently in the library advocacy/funding arena (Stenström, 2012). The six principles are:

- authority,
- consistency and commitment,
- liking,
- reciprocity,
- scarcity, and
- social proof.

The Cialdini framework is applicable to library support primarily because it considers both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in its description of characteristics. Additionally, upward, downward and lateral appeal are all encompassed, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the tactics of influence. Further, the principles continually evolve from the research and evidence presented earlier.

This section provides a brief explanation of each of the six principles followed by quotes from politicians and bureaucrats interviewed by the authors as well as research cited elsewhere in this paper. The term “target” is used here as the identified decision maker or influencer of decisions.

**Authority**

Authority can refer both to legitimate authority, that is, when an agent has hierarchical or organizational power over a target, or authority of expertise. When making an appeal, those who are perceived to have genuine knowledge, or the reputation as having genuine knowledge, may be able to make more persuasive arguments (Benoit, 2008).

*Example from a senior bureaucrat speaking about public libraries:* “The context is really important, and there’s an element of the Governor’s increasing interest in literacy. If the Governor is making a lot of public noise about setting targets for improving the literacy of the state, it becomes very difficult to do anything negative to libraries.... Literacy was a Governor’s initiative, which is actually quite distinct from a government initiative,” (quoted in Stenström, 2012).

*Inappropriate use of Authority can backfire; example from a senior bureaucrat speaking about public libraries:* “I would say that most chiefs of staff who enjoy success, I’m saying chiefs now more than cabinet members, because members are a bit more come-and-go, chiefs may move from department to department, if they don’t have the absolute authority from the Governor’s Office to make things happen, do have to establish allies and develop that sense of trust and collegiality with folks. And to the extent that their staff are doing the same thing, which makes it even more powerful. Quite candidly I can think of a couple of chiefs who’ve done that ‘I’m here on behalf of the Governor’ and I’m not sure that in the medium to long term that actually works to their advantage. They’re burning bridges. Next time, people will either implicitly or explicitly stifle them. I’ve certainly sat around the Cabinet table, when I was in Cabinet operations, and when I’ve
been on the executive of various departments, I had watched that happen,” (quoted in Stenström, 2012).

**General insights and implications:** The values and beliefs of those who hold power affect the outcome of decisions. Authority can be based on position (e.g., when the police chief advocates for libraries based on literacy for crime prevention) or on expertise (acknowledged for unique knowledge). Engaging those with authority for public support may be a useful tactic. Articulating the expertise of the professional librarian (for family literacy or for small business development, e.g.) may be more useful than advocating for a facility (library) and assumed (or presumed) services; this will be especially important if partner groups/leaders (day cares, chambers of commerce) advocate for this expertise.

**Consistency and commitment**

Consistency and Commitment relate to a target’s need to carry through on either previous statements or promises, or actions that appear consistent with their values and beliefs. An example of a public belief may be a party-wide campaign promise on which individual legislators act. Example from a senior bureaucrat speaking about public libraries: “It often comes down to the passion of a cabinet member when it comes down to libraries,” (quoted in Stenström, 2012).

**General insights and implications:** In study after study, the commitment and consistency of elected politicians is key to understanding. Values and beliefs might be labeled ideology. There is a tendency to label ideologies differing from our own as antithetical to our cause, yet consistent with previous studies the “right wing” can be more supportive of public libraries than the “left wing” (which can count on the vote of librarians regardless). Funding for IMLS, e.g., increased under the Republican administration and is decreasing under the Democratic administration. One can argue about Republican off-loading of unfunded programs to states and municipalities with the resulting reduction of local funding for public libraries yet the basic fact remains the same. The point is simply to “park” personal ideologies and assess the position of targets, without preconceived notions and assumptions.

Connecting with beliefs (e.g., that literacy is important) has the potential to be enormously powerful. The annual statement of priorities by the mayor, the opening day presentation by the college president, the platform of the new school board, are all important in and of themselves for providing insights to connecting agendas.

Values and beliefs need not be political. The beliefs of a school principal or superintendent, e.g., are instrumental in determining basic support. A target favoring “stand and deliver” teaching and learning pedagogies over inquiry based problem-solving will make the task of gaining support for libraries, designed for inquiry, just that much more difficult.

**Liking**

Liking reflects both the popular definition of the term—a mutual affinity between the target and agent—but may also encompass aspects of the mere exposure theory. In other words, a target may be more likely to feel positively toward an agent upon multiple introductions and interactions. The mere exposure theory further supports the notion that one may find an object
or person more attractive as they become more familiar. Both of these attributes can have a positive effect on influencing the target.

*Example from a senior bureaucrat speaking about public libraries:* “That was all based on building personal relationships with people....When I first came to this state I went and talked to all the support people, all the budget people. I had a relationship with those people for 20+ years, they had my back. When I shifted into libraries, it was no problem. They would see opportunities before I would in terms of the money and give me a heads up....The key is not to give up on developing personal relationships. For people coming in, I think the key message is about developing those relationships and not to silo yourself. We see that so often, libraries that haven’t asked for an increase in ten years, they become invisible to the community government. But then if you’re seen only as a yapping dog and haven’t told your story and built the relationship so the decision-makers are somehow attached to your library, you could be telling your story but it could be falling on deaf ears,” (quoted in Stenström, 2012).

**General insights and implications:** If getting a hearing is the goal, targets are more receptive if they believe they are liked by the requester. It is not that they like the requester, as they are more likely to reach that position if they believe that the requester genuinely likes them. This is the basis of a relationship so very important to success in advocacy. Targets cannot like an advocate if they do not know them. Targets cannot like an advocate if they do not encounter and engage with them, without anything being requested. Engaging with principals and superintendents, serving on school and district committees, attending school board meetings and speaking with trustees, these each give teacher-librarians exposure and opportunities to engage.

**Reciprocity**

Reciprocity reflects exchange theory and supports the notion that targets are more willing to comply with requests if the agent has had a prior exchange with the target. This can include examples such as favours, gifts, advice giving, introductions, etc. Surprisingly, Cialdini found that an agent may be more successful in influencing a target even if the favour was received by the agent, rather than given by him or her.

*Example from a senior bureaucrat speaking about public libraries (again, the most basic level of exchange and recognition could not be ignored):* “The more thoughtful lobby groups, interest groups, would always have a few things to thank the Secretary for when they walk in the Secretary’s office, whether they were recent or they had to reach into the distant past, they’d find something to get onto the right tone for the meeting and then they would turn to whatever their current problem was,” (quoted in Stenström, 2012).

*Inappropriate use of Reciprocity can backfire; example from a senior bureaucrat speaking about public libraries:* “One of the first responses of a couple of the librarians to rumors of a decrease was to immediately start, what I would call a ‘complaint campaign’. ‘You can’t do this to us, this is not right,’ which in my estimation makes a difficult decision on the part of government a whole lot easier. ‘Bunch of goddamn whiners, we’ve giving them
more money than they ever got from us, and this is what they do, they don't bother coming to talk to us…” (quoted in Stenström, 2012).

**General insights and implications:** This warrants considerably more study and integration with training. For example, even placing a handwritten note on a report constitutes a “gift” rather than simply forwarding the report. Introducing someone at a reception is a “favour” and constitutes reciprocity. If someone does a favour for an advocate (the target supports them, or at least listens to them), it is more likely to happen again.

During legislative day, a distinguished advocate provided each legislator (or staff member for the legislator) with a signed picture book with a personal inscription and call for support. The gift required that it be passed on with attribution. It also provided a context for further discussion. One does not embarrass. One does not go directly to the press or begin letter-writing campaigns. These negative pressure tactics are remembered. One builds relationships, remains positive and continues to build understanding and support incrementally over time.

Not only do the teacher-librarian behaviors of collaboration and informal staff development encourage student achievement, so too do school principals value them, as intuitive benefits and as fostering a better learning community. These “gifts” result in improved funding and support.

**Scarcity**

Scarcity refers to the possible lack of availability of an object or service. An everyday example could include the retail sales pitch cliché of “Buy now! They won't last at this price!” In the context of this paper, services that may be seen as valuable and hard to obtain are seen to be scarce, and therefore, may be “sold” to funders on that basis.  

*Example from a senior bureaucrat speaking about public libraries: “Most cabinet secretaries have at least two senior chiefs, and the question is are libraries important enough to be assigned the good one? Generally not,”* (quoted in Stenström, 2012).

**General insights and implications:** Stereotypes of library stakeholders communicating with elected officials only during times of need as well as the stereotype of libraries being quiet, dusty places filled with books that few read are held by decision-makers. This speaks to a notion that certain images and perceptions of libraries, the services they offer, and those who support them may not be congruent with the same images and impressions library stakeholders believe they are projecting. Are libraries scarce if they are viewed as outdated?

Consideration should be given to advocating for what can be demonstrably scarce and of value, viz., unique professional expertise that contributes to the well-being of the community (academic, school, municipal). School libraries, e.g., are not scarce as they continue to exist. Advocating for them is counterproductive as the room continues to exist. What is scarce is the unique expertise of the teacher-librarian and the behaviors that contribute to student learning. And this conundrum continues as teacher-librarians suffer from both self-interest and the curse of knowledge (an inability to state the case clearly and succinctly in terms understood by the target). Coalitions would be more successful, managed and led by others.
Social Proof

Social proof is the reflection of a decision-maker to act in accordance with peers or otherwise accordingly in situations where one option is clearly more socially acceptable than others. *Example from the academic library context:*

Presidents, deans, provosts, and business officers talk to—and influence—one another. What is being discussed or raised as an issue at Stanford will soon be heard at Michigan, Cornell, and Arizona. It is politically wise to consider these and other such themes seriously as they emerge. It also is important to consider whether this wording can be used before solidifying the final budget proposal (Stoffle, 1993, p. 11).

**General insights and implications:** Advocacy efforts need to consider the associations, conferences, gathering places of influencers and decision-makers and how they might best use the principles of persuasion in a concerted multi-year advocacy plan.

Every school administrator in the country did not determine alone to cut school libraries, or more accurately, teacher-librarians. They talk to each other. They discuss the difficulties of budget reductions and where cuts might most easily be made with minimal damage to student learning. Advocates need to develop relationships to intervene in these professional networks.

Different targets use different language and different metrics. For example, in a previously unpublished study, the authors compared municipalities in two different jurisdictions, where per capita support for public libraries varied from $26 per capita to $79 per capita. Library directors discussed this disparity and the reasons for it. However, when interviewed, city managers disclosed that each municipality allocated almost exactly the same percentage of municipal funds to libraries. In other words, social proof led chief administrative officers to allocate the same percentage of the budget with a result of very different per capita allocations. Advocating for the same amount as a neighbouring municipality was a non-starter as the library was already receiving “the same” [percentage].

School principals, superintendents, and trustees, attend their own associations and conventions. They read their own professional journals. This where the advocacy efforts begin, in communicating in language that resonates with decision-makers, enabling a foundation for discussion at the school and district levels. Appearing on programs, speaking at events, honoring school leaders at their conferences, writing for administrator journals (better yet, writing with an administrator), all contribute to advancing the scarcity of the teacher-librarian and the attendant loss of support for students and teachers.

**Propositions for Best Practices**

While evidence within the literature on the advocacy techniques that are most effective for positively influencing decision-makers is still relatively scarce, the conclusions that can be drawn from this kind of review are strengthened by the application of evidence drawn from other areas such as budgetary decision-making and public administration.

Techniques employed in the advocacy process can be categorized as both active and passive. Within each category, the approaches studied have been shown to range from effective to ineffective.
Direct appeals within the context of existing relationships between decision makers and library stakeholders characterize successful approaches, while campaigns taking advantage of messaging conveyed by library users or otherwise depersonalized groups are perceived as less effective by decision makers. The evidence of the importance of relationship building with strategic actors within each library’s decision-making context is now becoming apparent through numerous investigations carried out in a variety of settings. Targeting those decision-makers whose values align with the goals of libraries can create additional opportunities for success. In other words, petitions will work less well than well-crafted messages delivered by a group of school administrators, teachers and/or parents known to decision-makers.

Analysis of existing programs and their stated objectives and measures of success become important. It is then necessary to compare these training programs and toolkits to successful strategies and make revisions accordingly. Each situation is unique. Each metric for success will be different for each decision maker. It is important to understand priorities and to connect agendas. It is important to build understanding over time, making deposits (building understanding) without withdrawals (making requests). It is also important to understand that the relationship with the decision maker and influencers is the critical ingredient, drawing in principles of authority, liking, reciprocity, scarcity and social proof, while appealing to the target’s commitments and consistency.

The evidence is important, but the relationship is the message.

References


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