



SLA

SASKATCHEWAN LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

Preparing for the Advocacy Training Session at the 2017 Conference Influencing and Telling Stories

Now is the summer of our discontent, made terrible winter by an unfortunate economic climate. Though now we must enter a new phase in our struggle to advance the cause of libraries of all types, we must do so without resorting to personal attacks but by responding with accurate information. It is incumbent upon us to counter this ignorance with true tales of great deeds performed on behalf of everyday Saskatchewanians, to demonstrate our value not only with well-researched numbers but also with stories from the grassroots.

While we cannot expect politicians or the general public to be mindful – to consider the outcomes – of their decisions, we must be. Although we may be enraged by the recent cuts to services, we must be respectful. We must keep our ultimate goals in mind – that of providing the best possible service to our users, and demonstrating our usefulness – while building mutually beneficial relationships without the expectation of immediate results. As advocates, we must utilize every platform and every venue, from front desk to the community at large, to create and foster the bonds between us and the communities we serve, to listen to the needs of our users, and to discover what those who do not yet use our services or are otherwise unaware of them want. Our relations with stakeholders, funding agents, co-sponsors, and local media must not be contentious even in stressful times; we must always look forward.

We are now at a crossroads. Though it is the time for placards and rousing speeches if library services are to be saved, we as advocates understand that the relationships we build today must be continuously maintained and reinvigorated through honest dealing. We must campaign SMART: have **s**pecific targets, identify **m**easurable and **a**chievable outcomes, be **r**elevant to the a politician's message while remaining apolitical, and be **t**ime-bound (within a fiscal cycle or election period). In our communications, we must be BASIC: **b**rief, **a**ppreciative, **s**pecific, **i**nformative, and **c**ourteous.

Courtesy is little protection in difficult times. We must be ready to respond to negative publicity and hostility with polite but firm restructuring of an argument towards our ultimate aims. Expect to be ambushed: prepare positive soundbites and remain on-message about what we intend to achieve, for whom we intend to achieve it, how long it will take, and how it aligns with decision-makers' aims.

Be strong and hold firm.