Chapter 13
Building Influence:
Strategising for Library Advocacy

Magnus Osahon Igbinovia
Ambrose Alli University, Nigeria

Esther Oluwayinka Solanke
University of Medical Sciences, Ondo, Nigeria

Oluwatoyin Oyeyemi Obinyan
ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0785-6613
Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The poor perception of libraries by the general public and their unfavorable position in government corridors can be corrected by library advocacy (LA). While we all struggle to gain support for our libraries, there is need to "talk-up" the library by showcasing its relevance to national development in the 21st century. As a result of this, there is need for a text on advocacy in Africa and beyond, which prompted this chapter on strategizing for library advocacy. The chapter looks at introduction to library advocacy, building team for library advocacy, strategies for developing and getting messages out in library advocacy, media of library advocacy, and getting feedback and appraisal of library advocacy. The chapter concludes by affirming that strategy for library advocacy will create a roadmap for promoting libraries among stakeholders, thus retaining its place of pride as a social and information-based institution. Thereafter, recommendations were made on how to ensure effective strategy for library advocacy.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century library is greatly challenged by the continuous evolving innovations in information technologies as well as the global economic meltdown that has led to dwindling funds for social services. All these have seemingly threatened the continuous existence of the library regardless of its relevance to individual and national development. The influx and adoption of Information Technologies (IT) by information users has obviously provided quicker access to a myriad of information even from a remote area. This has negatively influenced perception of the relevance of libraries especially in meeting 21st century information needs. Also, as the economy is challenged around the world, libraries are continuously experiencing closures and budget constraints which depict the unfavorable position of libraries in government scale of preference as pertains to attention and funding. However, to a large extent, library advocacy can ameliorate these situations.

Library advocacy is a planned and systematic approach to promote the library and ensure its survival and growth. According to the Canadian Association of Public Libraries (2011), advocacy is a "planned, deliberate, sustained effort to raise awareness of an issue or issues. Advocacy is thus an ongoing process whereby support and understanding are built incrementally over an extended period of time". Library advocacy involves speaking up for libraries mostly in times of reduced funding, personnel, resources, unfavorable policies and low level of use.

Library advocates continuously speak up for the library and also draw the attention of important people or decision makers towards the need of library, (Miller, 2009) and the strategies by which these activities of advocacy are carried out is crucial for its success. This chapter of the book therefore gives an understanding on the strategies for library advocacy. In view of this, the following specific objectives of the chapter are to:

1. Examine how to build team for library advocacy
2. Discuss possible strategies for developing and getting messages out in library advocacy
3. Investigate the various media for library advocacy
4. Examine how to get feedback and appraisal of library advocacy

BUILDING TEAM FOR LIBRARY ADVOCACY

Library advocacy is all about getting and mobilizing people who have good opinions of the library to speak to others on its behalf; to convince other people of its values and relevance to guarantee its survival. It is a deliberate plan that is designed to

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