

**How Library  
Friends Can Be  
“Super Supporters”**



Friends of Michigan  
Libraries

April 2022

# My Background

- Library Marketing & Communications Consultant since 2018
- 20+ years in Marketing & Communications; 15 with Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
- Accredited in Public Relations
- 2016 *Library Journal* Marketer of the Year, Two-time John Cotton Dana winner
- Advisory Board Member, UNC Charlotte Atkins Library





Library  
**MARKETING**  
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# Today's Topics



**Friends Groups**



**Friends Audiences**



**Reaching Your Audiences**



**Engaging Friends As Super Supporters**



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# Library Friends

Friends extend a library's capacity through:

- Monetary Gifts
- Volunteer and Program Support
- Advocacy





# Characteristics Of Friends Groups

**May not be closely connected with library operations. (Separate 501c3)**

**May be the library's only supporting organization (if there is not a foundation).**

**May restrict support to specific branches or programs of the library.**

**Tend to skew older, with retirees having more time to dedicate to the effort.**

**Many stopped or suspended activities (book sales, events and programmatic support) during the pandemic.**

**Advocacy may or may not be a strong suit.**





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## The Opportunity

- Coming back from the pandemic, there's an opportunity to focus and engage friends in new and different ways!
- Now, more than ever, libraries need strong and organized advocacy.
- Friends groups – especially established ones – are uniquely positioned to fill that need.



A group of five people, three women and two men, are sitting around a table in a bright, modern setting. They are all smiling and looking at books. The woman on the left is wearing a green shirt and glasses. The woman in the center is wearing a yellow cardigan over a white top. The man on the right is wearing a checkered shirt. The man in the foreground is wearing a blue checkered shirt. The woman on the far right is wearing a white top. They are all holding open books and appear to be engaged in a discussion or reading session.

**Let's Start By Looking At Friends Audiences**

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## 2018 Study “From Awareness To Funding”

Looked at voter perceptions and support of public libraries in 2018. Used survey data from 2008 and compared it to 2018. Identified different types of supporters.

Research and report led by OCLC, the Office for Library Advocacy of the American Library Association, and its Public Library Association division.



# Types of Supporters

For our purposes, we will focus on the top two segments: **Super Supporters** and **Probable Supporters**.

Library Support Segmentation Pyramid





# Super Supporters

- People who most value the library and are most firmly committed to supporting library funding.
- *Are likely already Friends or Donors.*
- Have above average education but otherwise demographically average in age, gender, race and income.
- Committed to a strong library: 87% are willing to pay more in local taxes to fund the library.
- Avid readers and learners.
- Visit library average of 16 times per year – same as a decade ago.



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## Probable Supporters

The Probable Supporters tier, with five segments, includes people who are likely to support library funding initiatives but are less committed than Super Supporters.

*These segments are a great place to recruit new Friends Group members, potentially turning them into Friends and Super Supporters!*







## Just For Fun

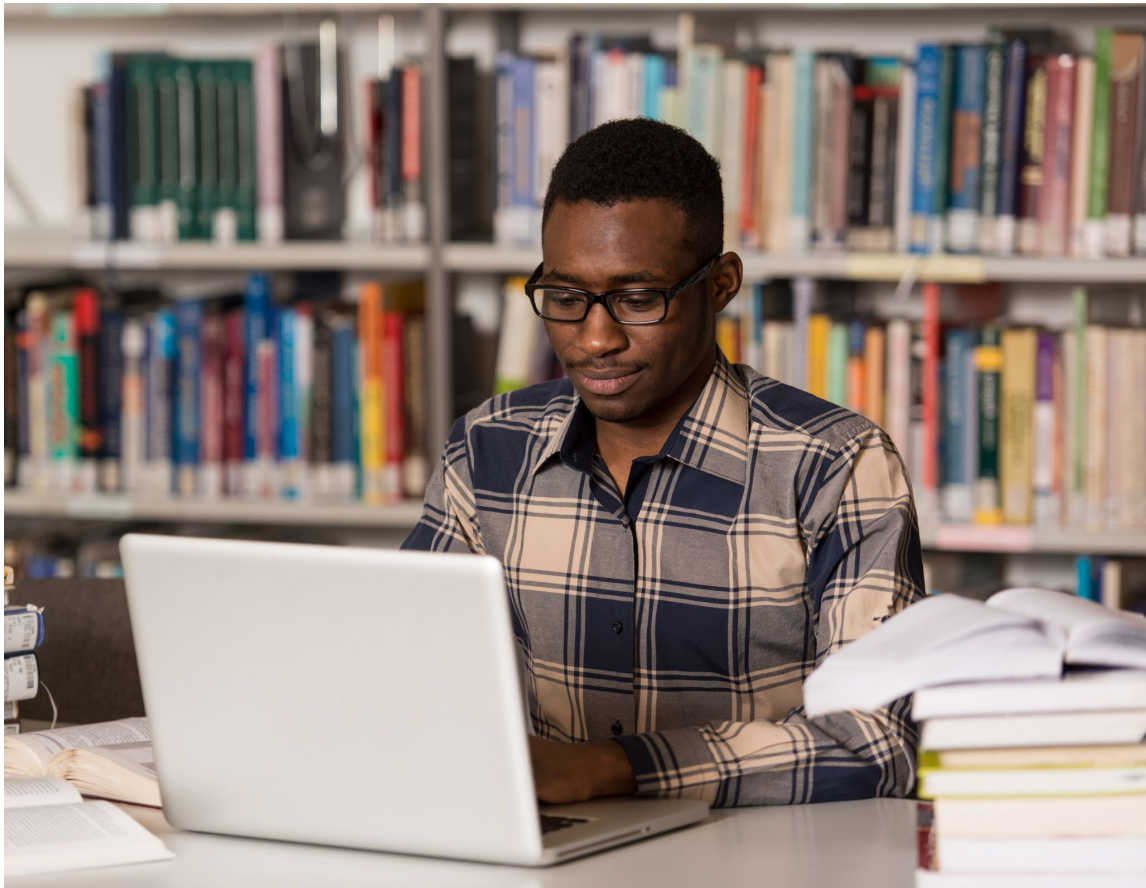
- See the library as a place to relax, hang out, socialize with others.
- Recognize the library's role as a community gathering place.
- Have positive views of the library, particularly in offering a range of entertainment options, having the “right staff,” and being an invaluable resource.
- Overall impression of libraries and librarians remains high.



## Kid Driven

- Focused on the role the library plays in educating and inspiring children.
- The biggest users of children's books and entertainment.
- Believe libraries are an excellent resource for homework help for kids.
- *Visit frequency has declined.*
- *Less convinced of the role libraries play in children's lives.*





## Library As Office

- Smallest segment of Probable Supporters.
- Use library for work and study, see it as an important, practical resource in their lives. Frequent users.
- See library as an essential, functional resource. Want a quiet, comfortable place to work and access the latest technology.
- Usage has increased significantly for job seeking, organizational research or work, and using equipment such as copiers.
- *No longer see the library excelling in key services, such as quiet spaces and access to computers.*
- *From 2008-2018, fewer agree the library has done a good job of keeping up with changing technology.*



## Look to Librarians

- Value a librarian's knowledge and research expertise.
- Believe that librarians are advocates for learning in the community.
- Second only to Super Supporters in positive perceptions of libraries.
- See a direct connection between funding and staff.
- *Yet, their consistently positive attitude is coupled with a decline in usage from 2008-2018.*
- *Although they still treasure the library as a place of learning, fewer of them agree that something essential would be lost if libraries shut down.*





## Greater Good

- Strongly believe the library plays an essential role in the overall wellbeing of a community.
- Feel it is important for the library to provide free access to a broad range of knowledge resources and technology, offer quiet work areas, and be an excellent educational resource for students.
- Agree that the library is an invaluable resource even in the Internet age.
- *Use the library less than other Super Supporters, but usage has remained steady since 2008.*





## How to Use This Knowledge

- **Super Supporters** may already be in your Friends Group.
- **Probable Supporters** present an opportunity to grow and diversify your Friends Group.
- A larger, more diverse Friends Group can bring new energy to library support.
- How can you raise awareness and reach these groups?



An elderly couple is sitting at a table in a kitchen, looking at a laptop. The man is wearing a plaid shirt and the woman is wearing a light blue shirt. They are both smiling and appear to be engaged in a conversation. The background shows a kitchen with blue cabinets and a window. The text "Reaching Your Friends Audiences" is overlaid on the image in white, bold font, with a thin white line underneath it.

# Reaching Your Friends Audiences

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## Target Your Communications

Understanding these segments can enable your library and your Friends Group to target communications and customize messaging to more effectively reach people.





## Use Marketing & Communications Strategies to Reach Potential Friends

- Reach them digitally – email marketing, social media, digital advertising, text messaging.
- Tell your stories across multiple channels, reaching them where they are.
- Consider targeted programming for these groups.
- Solicit their feedback and follow up on it.
- Ask them to join your Friends Group.
- Offer quality content.

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## Offer Quality Content

Messaging to and about your library Friends Group across all channels should ...

- Answer “**What’s in it for me?**” for your audiences.
- Convey why joining the Friends is a great choice.
- Position your Friends as *the* sought-after organization to join.
- Feature personal stories, i.e. “Why I joined the Friends.”
- Draw a direct connection between **funding** and **staff**.
- Report back on what your Friends is doing to improve the library, and in turn, how the library is improving the community.
- Thank them for previous support.







## Ask Them to Give and/or Advocate

- Make donating and/or advocating easy!
- Create a social media “cheat sheet” with content (text AND images) that they can easily share with their networks.
- Deliver a clear call-to-action -- i.e. what you want them to do -- in a format that is accessible and mobile-friendly.
- Offer recurring payment options for donors and charge a small fee for events.



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## Power Up Your Library or Friends Website

- This is the “hub” for content about your library and Friends. All other channels (social, email, flyers, etc.) should point people back here.
- Ensure it is appealing, up-to-date, and features relevant content.
- Make it easy for people to join or donate.
- Ensure that it is mobile-friendly.





## Leverage Your Library or Friends Email Lists

- Avoid a “hard ask” for money. Instead, focus on **education** and **engagement**.
- Share information of value.
- Set a frequency – monthly, quarterly, etc.



# Share Messaging On Social Media

- Leverage library an/or Friends social media accounts.
- If they are separate accounts, tag the library in all Friends posts.
- Include dynamic, compelling photos.
- Use personal stories from Friends of library users.
- Post across multiple channels (start free Hootsuite account if needed).



## Try a Storytelling Campaign

Storytelling is a way to speak to the hearts of your audiences. They can be accompanied with a call-to-action to join the Friends, give or advocate.

- Step 1: Gather and/or create stories about your library.
- Step 2: Tell those stories to your library's audiences.



## Positive/Negative “What If” Stories





**Positive:** “What if the library could fully meet the needs of everyone in the community, because it had all the funding, facilities and staff that it needs? What would life look like for community members?”

**Negative:** “What if the library disappeared from the community forever? What would life look like for community members?”







**YES**  
to the Library Question means:



-  Expanding Library services for children, students, seniors, families, and others
-  Extending Library hours, increasing access to programs and materials
-  Modernizing computers and other digital resources and expanding training
-  Renovating or replacing aging Library branches

**NO**  
to the Library Question means:



-  Acquiring fewer new materials and resources including books, movies, music, magazines, databases, and other research tools
-  Cutting back Library hours, reducing access to computers, materials, services, and programs
-  Scaling back technology updates and likely falling short in meeting our community's growing digital needs
-  Making only basic repairs and postponing renovations; facilities will deteriorate

## Example Of Positive and Negative “What If” Stories

[www.kclibrary.org/election](http://www.kclibrary.org/election)

## Stories of Impact

These are stories about how the library helps people.

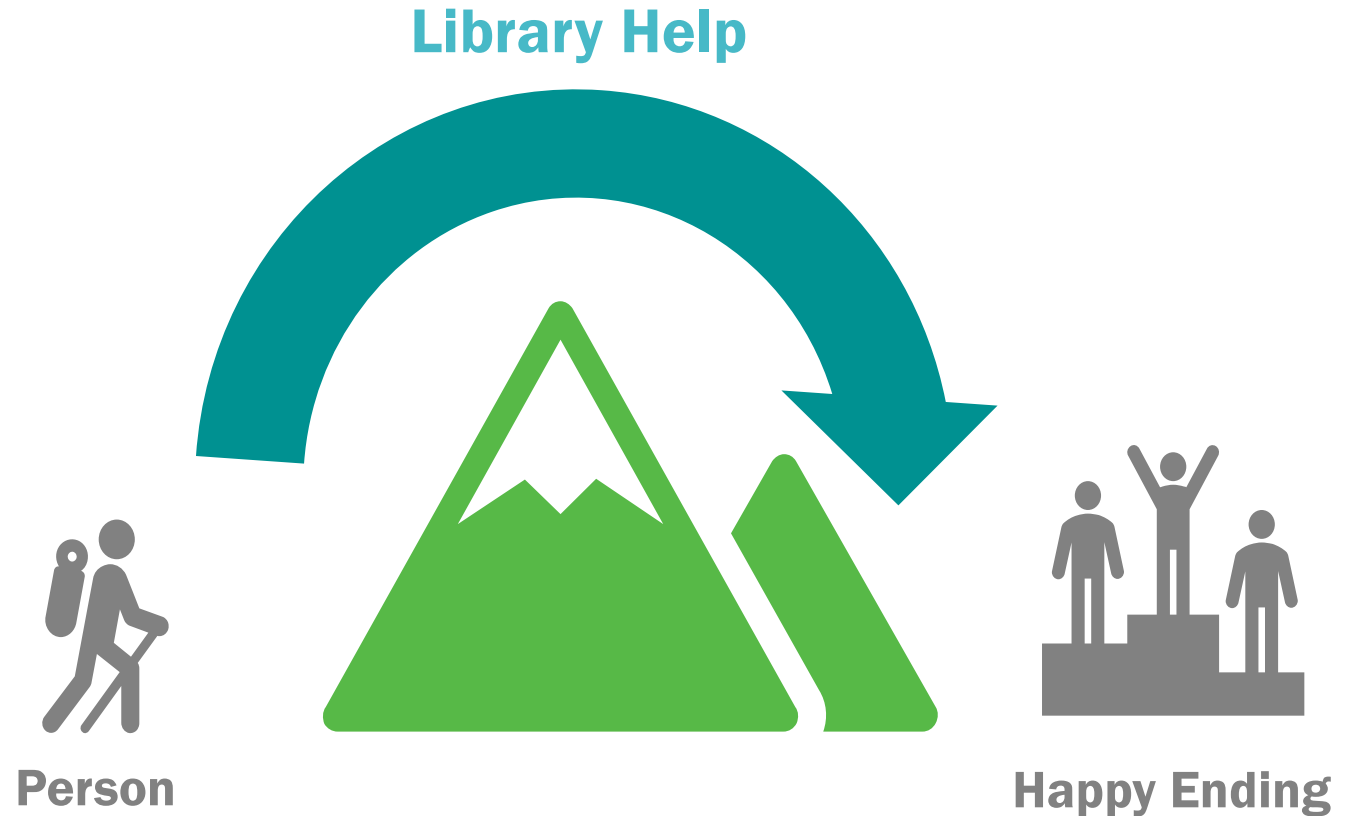
They have four components:

**Person**

**Problem**

**Library Help**

**Happy Ending**





# Example of a Story of Impact

- **Person:** Debbie Spacko
- **Problem:** She was furloughed from her job as a customer service representative.
- **Library Help:** Addison Public Library's Job Seeker Services.
- **Happy Ending:** Thanks to the skills she learned, she applied for and got a sales job.



The screenshot shows the Addison Public Library website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the library logo, menu items (Borrow, Services, Events, Research, Technology, From Home), a language selector (Español), a search bar (Find books & more...), and a search button. The main content area features the article title "Success Story: Life after Getting Addison Back to Work" by Emily Glimco, Communications and Marketing Coordinator, dated Jan. 2021. The article text describes Debbie Spacko's experience of being furloughed in April 2020 and her subsequent use of library job seeker services to find a new sales job. A circular photograph of Debbie Spacko, wearing a face mask and glasses, is positioned on the right side of the article. At the bottom of the article, the URL [www.addisonlibrary.org/career-success](http://www.addisonlibrary.org/career-success) is provided.

**ADDISON PUBLIC LIBRARY** Borrow Services Events Research Technology From Home **Español** Find books & more... Search

## Success Story: Life after Getting Addison Back to Work

by Emily Glimco, Communications and Marketing Coordinator, Jan. 2021

Debbie Spacko's story starts like many Americans: in April 2020, she was furloughed from her job as a customer service representative.

"In the first couple of months of the pandemic, everyone was hoping things would get better. I was on unemployment, I could survive, but not really live, and it was very scary," said Spacko. "When it became obvious things weren't going to change, while I knew I wasn't ready to look for a new job, I decided I couldn't just sit there all day."

Spacko started looking into networking groups and opportunities for her to improve her skills to prepare for a potential career change.

"Through networking, I learned a lot about myself and what I wanted in a career, and I feel like a totally different person after attending," said Spacko. "There was always something I could take from hearing other people's stories and words of encouragement. You never know where networking will take you."

[www.addisonlibrary.org/career-success](http://www.addisonlibrary.org/career-success)



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# How Storytelling Campaigns Engage Friends

- These stories can **inspire** your Friends and help them **refocus** on **why** they want to support the library.
- They also become great talking points for your Friends Group members!
  - They can share them with their personal networks.
  - They can use them when recruiting new members.
  - They can share them at events.
- They are also a great way to communicate how Friends' advocacy and financial support can help the library to help more people.





# Places to Share Stories

- Friends Channels:
  - Friends Meetings & Events
  - Social Media
  - Website
  - Newsletter
- Library Channels:
  - Programs & Events
  - Social Media
  - Website
  - Newsletter
- Media Relations



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# Media Relations

- Another way to tell stories that highlight the work of your library or Friends group.
- You can explain the “cause,” and get people interested in events, advocating or donating.
- Types of media relations opportunities include:
  - Media partnership or sponsorship.
  - News releases or media advisories about Friends initiatives or events.
  - Story pitches.
  - Letters to the editor or opinion pieces in the local paper.







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## Story Pitches: A TV Reporter's Perspective

- “Reporters want to be the managers of their own destinies, rather than covering the bad story of the day.”
- When pitching, “Come to me with a problem, not a resolution.” Ex: “If this problem is not resolved, these dire consequence will happen.”
- Make the reporter feel like a champion for that cause, an active part of solving the problem.

## Suggestion From “Awareness To Funding”

“Connect announcements of new programs or services to larger stories about how the library supports school-age children, workforce readiness, or small business development.”





A group of five diverse people (three women and two men) are sitting around a round wooden table in a library. They are all smiling and appear to be engaged in a conversation. The background is filled with bookshelves. The text "Engaging Friends As Super Supporters" is overlaid in the center of the image.

# Engaging Friends As Super Supporters



# Use Events as Engagement Opportunities

- **Be strategic.** Begin with the end in mind.
  - Is it a fundraiser?
  - Is it an opportunity to convene Friends and recruit potential Friends?
  - Is it an opportunity to share your messaging with potential advocates or donors?
  - Is it some or all of the above?
- Once you've determined the purpose, structure the event accordingly.
- Ask your existing Friends to help market the event and share it with their personal networks.







## Target Your Events to Friends and Potential Friends

**Start with your audiences.** Ask yourself:

- Where do they congregate?
- What are their interests?
- What are their needs?



# Communicate About the Event

Tell eventgoers what they'll get out of the event!

- Access to community or library leaders.
- Social media opportunities (i.e. photos with influencers, cool backdrops or props, professional photos).
- Networking and fellowship opportunities.
- Location – “cool” spaces, breweries, community gathering places outside the library.
- Specialized expertise – genealogy, research, local history, etc.
- Opportunity to join the Friends and donate or advocate.





## Example: Final Draught

- Created in 2017 by the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation's Friends Council.
- Platform to connect young professionals to the Library and Library Foundation.
- Hosted at local breweries with special guests.
- Tickets are \$10.

[foundation.cmlibrary.org/final-draught](https://foundation.cmlibrary.org/final-draught)



# Determine Your Friends Advocacy Strategy

- Friends groups can advocate for public funding in a way that libraries can't.
- When local funding is at stake, Friends can use the strategies we've discussed to improve perceptions about the library among voters and local officials.
- At right: Example of an advocacy strategy.





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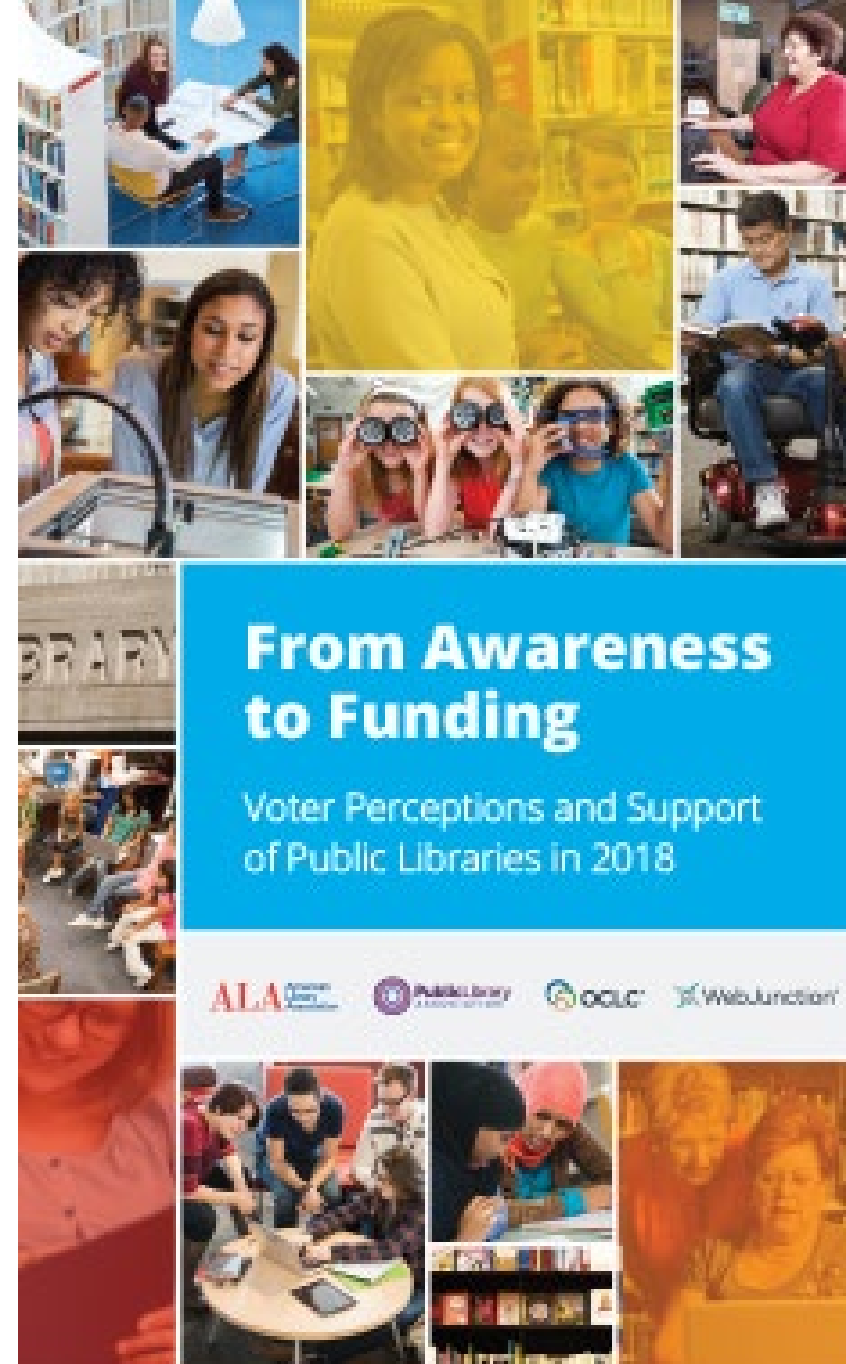
## Engage Friends as Advocates

- Communicate clearly what your library needs.
- Keep it simple! Make it easy for them to advocate.
- Tell them who you need them to advocate to.
- Share content, strategies, stories that they can use. Ex: “elevator speech.”



## Sources / Additional Reading

- From Awareness to Funding 2018  
[www.oclc.org/research/publications/2018/oclcresearch-awareness-to-funding.html](http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/2018/oclcresearch-awareness-to-funding.html)
- 5 Probable Supporters and How to Reach Them  
[www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/awareness-to-funding-supporters.html](http://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/awareness-to-funding-supporters.html)





# Advocacy Groups, Resources & Campaigns

- [Libraries Transform Campaign](#)
- [ilovelibraries.org](http://ilovelibraries.org)
- [EveryLibrary](#)
- [United for Libraries](#) (note this is their Facebook page because their website was down)
- [Geek the Library](#)
- [Urban Libraries Council Friends Education & Advocacy Resources](#)
- [Michigan Library Association Advocacy Resources](#)

BECAUSE 5 OUT  
OF 5 DOCTORS  
AGREE READING  
ALoud TO  
CHILDREN  
SUPPORTS  
BRAIN  
DEVELOPMENT.



# Discussion

Library Card







## Connect With Me

Cordelia Anderson

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