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Before the Ballot
How to prepare for an election

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Presented on March 12, 2019
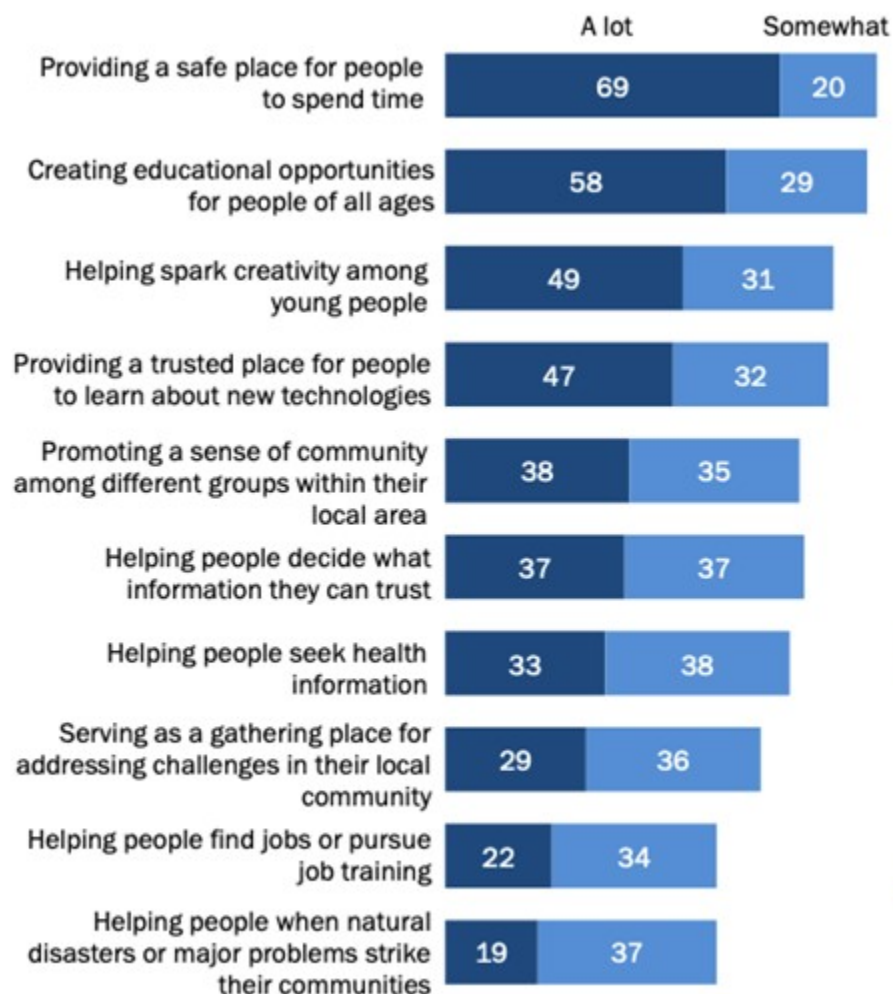Colorado State Library

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Pro Bono campaign support for library leaders and communities

Policy and advocacy for school libraries

Public engagement partnerships with state library organizations

Building a digital national network of library supporters

	A lot	Somewhat
Providing a safe place for people to spend time	69	20
Creating educational opportunities for people of all ages	58	29
Helping spark creativity among young people	49	31
Providing a trusted place for people to learn about new technologies	47	32
Promoting a sense of community among different groups within their local area	38	35
Helping people decide what information they can trust	37	37
Helping people seek health information	33	38
Serving as a gathering place for addressing challenges in their local community	29	36
Helping people find jobs or pursue job training	22	34
Helping people when natural disasters or major problems strike their communities	19	37

CIVIC ATTITUDES
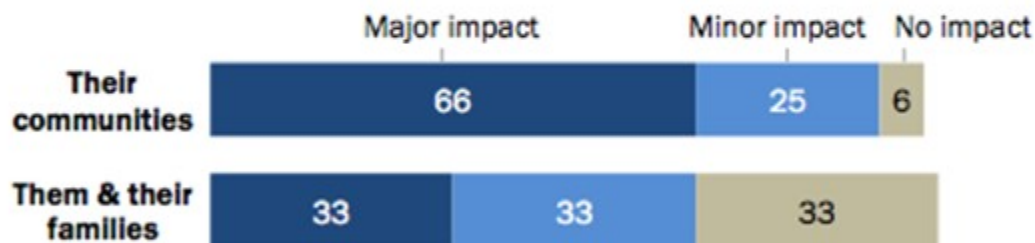
CIVIC ATTITUDES

People think closing their local public libraries would hurt communities

% of U.S. adults ages 16 and older who say closing their local libraries would have the following impacts on ...

	Major impact	Minor impact	No impact
Their communities	66	25	6
Them & their families	33	33	33

the data VOTER ATTITUDES

In 2018 voters view the library as:

55% - an essential local institution

58% - advancing education

53% - a source of community pride

51% - enhancing the quality of life

**the
data** VOTER ATTITUDES

In 2018 of all voters:

27% will Definitely vote yes for the library

31% are likely to yes for the library

42% are likely or will definitely vote no

the data

VOTER ATTITUDES

**The positive image of the library has increased.
The willingness to vote for it has decreased.**

Tier/Segment	% of total population		% of segment that would vote "yes" for libraries		Number of annual library visits		% who rate libraries positively		% who rate librarians positively	
	2008	2018	2008	2018	2008	2018	2008	2018	2008	2018
Super Supporters	7.1%	6.5%	80%	64%	15.9	15.9	71%	80%	72%	73%
Probable Supporters	32.3%	25.6%	47%	36%	19.9	13.6	73%	73%	72%	65%

TABLE 2. Voter Enthusiasm about Library Staff

| Librarian Ratings	2008 (%)	2018 (%)
Friendly and approachable	67	53
True advocate for lifelong learning	56	46
Knowledgeable about my community	54	42
Understands the community's needs and how to address them through the public library	48	42
Has excellent computer skills	50	42
Well known in the community	40	31

Voter Attitudes about Libraries

27% will Definitely vote yes for the library

31% May vote yes for the library

21% May vote no

21% will Vote No
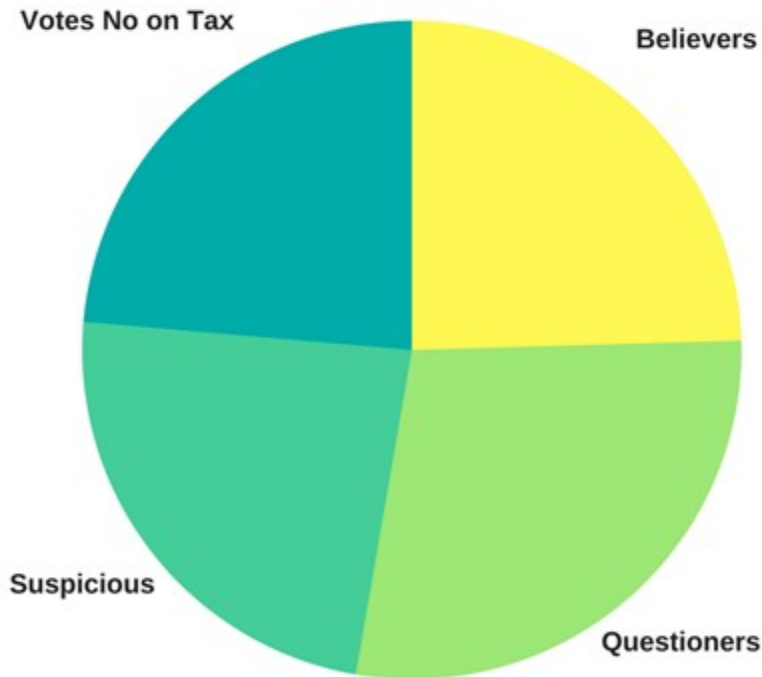
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POLITICAL
PARTY
DOESN'T
MATTER
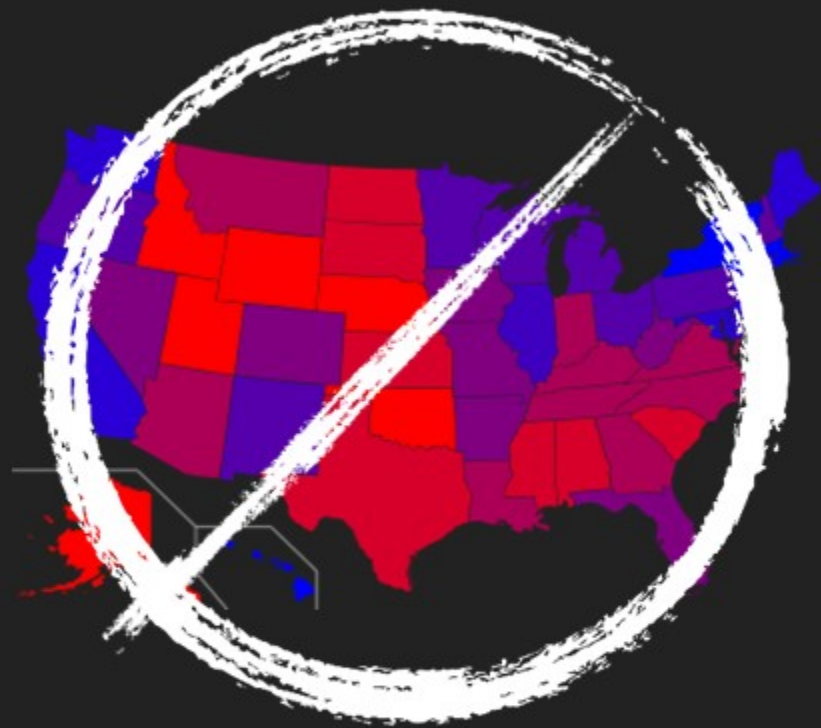
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LIBRARY USE

DOESN'T

MATTER

Questioners Want Answers

The factors that determine residents' willingness to increase their taxes to support their local library are their *perceptions* and *attitudes* about **the library** and **the librarian**.
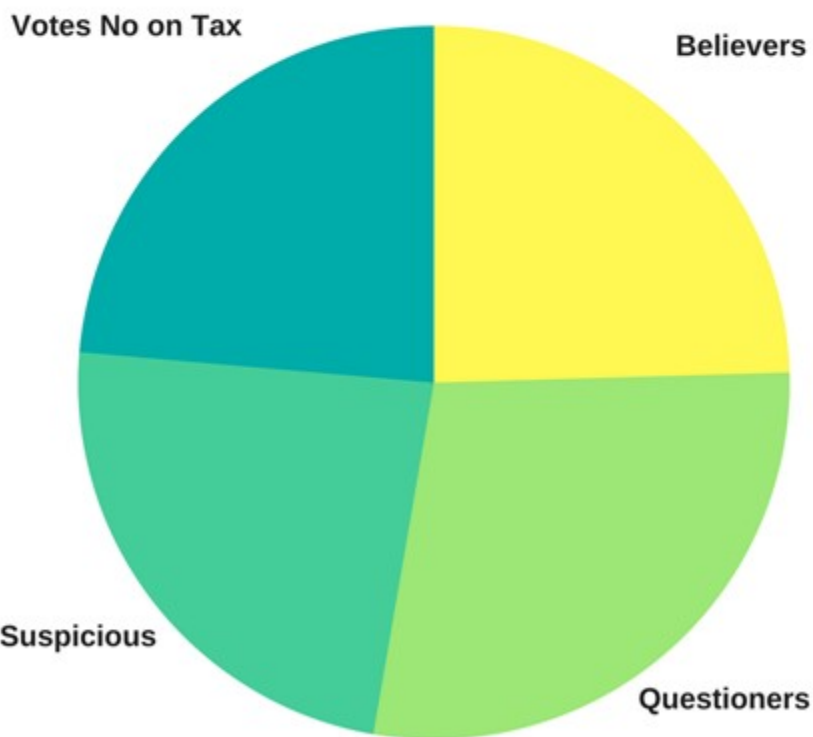
- OCLC 2008 "From Awareness to Funding" p. 7-3

the data

WHAT DOES MATTER?

Voter Attitudes about Libraries

Votes No on Tax

Believers

Suspicious

Questioners

They are "Believers" in the library and librarians

They are "Questioners" who will listen to an answer.

Their world view is generally or specifically against taxes. "Leverage" is a key driver of any success with them.

Believers Believe

[T]he library is not perceived as just a provider of practical answers and information; the most committed supporters hold the **belief** that the library is a transformational *force*.

- OCLC 2008 "From Awareness to Funding" p. 7-4

Perception of the Librarian(s)

[Voters] recognize the value of a '*passionate librarian*' as a true advocate for lifelong learning.

- OCLC 2008 "From Awareness to Funding" p. 7-4

# What Activates Voters for a Library Measure?

The Librarian is the Candidate

The Library is the Incumbent

Library = Librarians + Community

How Voters Relate to Candidates
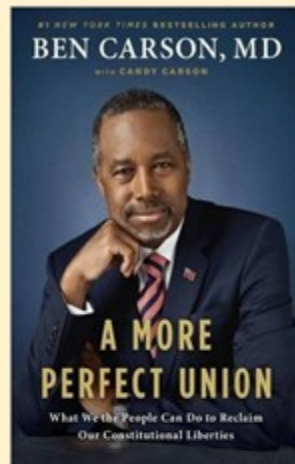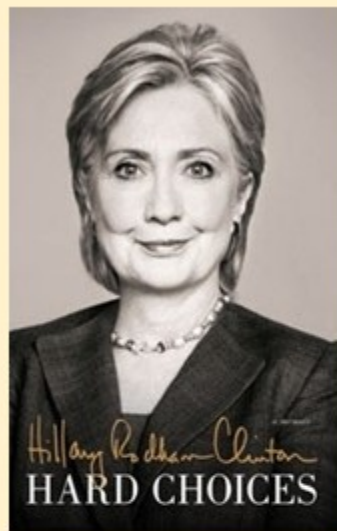
1. Shared Values - Do they care about people like me?

2. Shared Identity - Trust that the candidate is representing my concerns.

3. Personal Characteristics - Qualities?

4. Predictability - Policy and praxis.

-The Political Brain, p. 140
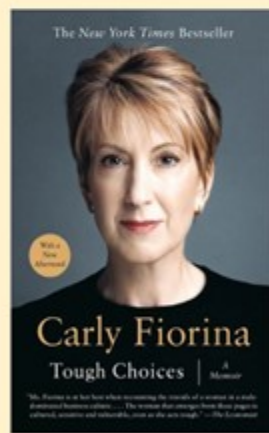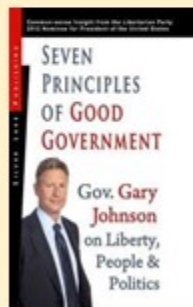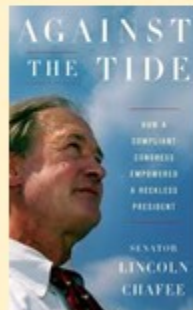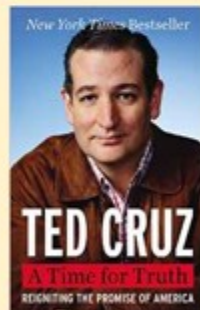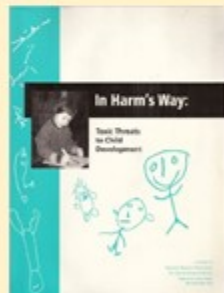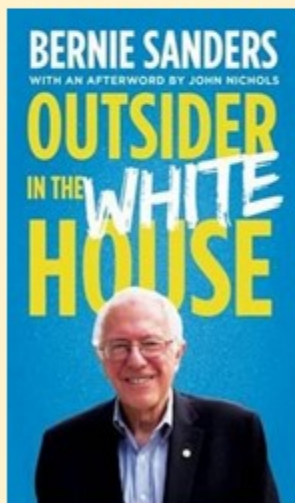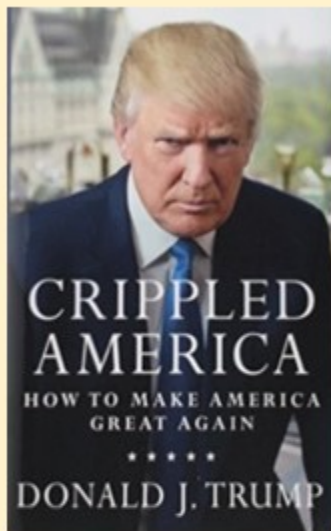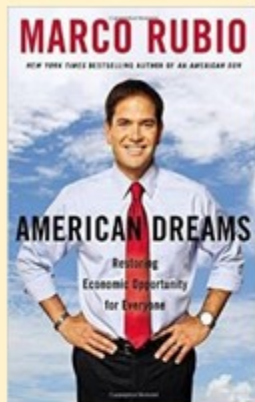
How Candidates Transmit their Values

*What is Your Book?

Strategic Plan

Management Plan

Building Plan

Budget Book

Fundraising Goals

Financials and Fiduciary
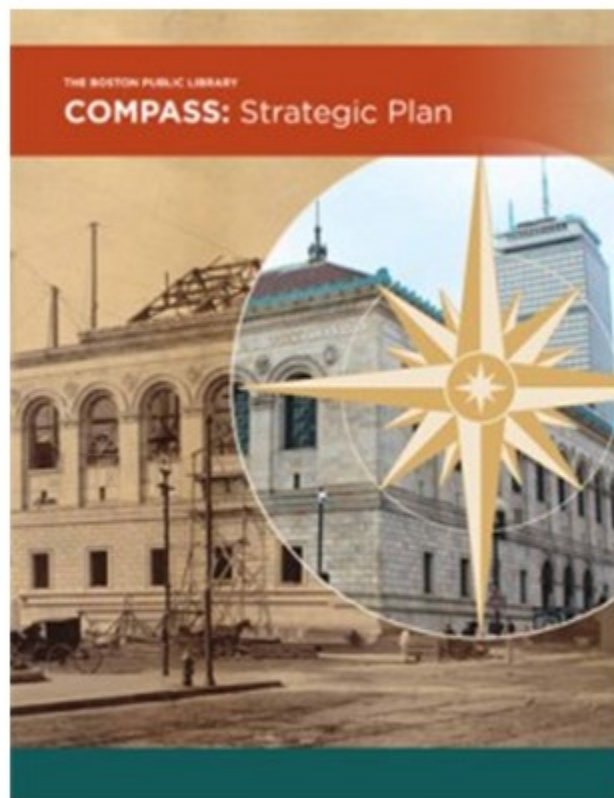
Who Else Cares?

They want to see you have the funding you need, too. If they know about it...

What is Your Personal Why?

Your values about libraries?

Your vision for your community?

Why you do this work/service?

What happens if you don't?

Staff Meeting Homework - VMV

A. Why do you work at the library?	**VALUES**
B. What are your personal values about libraries and librarianship?	
C. How is your service an expression of those values?	**VISION**
D. What problems do you enjoy trying to solve for the community?	**MISSION**
E. What problems do you enjoy trying to solve individual patrons?	

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Building Voter Support For Libraries

Who Else Cares = Potential Partners

1. Educational Partners
2. Social Welfare and Religious Partners
3. Governmental Partners
4. Civic Partners
5. Business Partners
6. Politicians
7. Media

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What Coalitions Already Exist in Town/County?

Economic Development

Literacy and Early Childhood

Grade Level Reading

Housing and Food Security

Immigration

Safety and Violence

Over a Cup of Coffee

I Like what you're doing ---> *We'll keep you informed...*

I Support what you are doing ---> *How you can help...*

I Want to identify with it ---> *You're on the committee!*

The Plan that Needs to Be Written

I did this. We need that.

Four Tips to Develop the Plan(s)

1. Talk to non-users as frequently and in the same way as you survey users.

2. Change the way you field your surveys. Do them out in the community.

3. Ask questions about "perception of the librarians" and not just about the library as an institution.

4. Run a poll or have a third party organization (e.g. FOL, Foundation, non-profit organization, college or university) test the local tolerance for taxes at least 18 months prior to the Election.

It's Not About Making More Users

"If you focus your marketing and messaging to convince people to become users, you will alienate people who don't want to be users but still value who you are and what you do."

- Before the Ballot (2019)

Why Libraries Lose

Sometimes the Opposition is Internal

8 Reasons Why Libraries Lose

1. The day of the vote is the first time enough people see the Plans

2. The library staff or leadership kills it from inside

3. Local elected officials don't want it to pass

4. There are local "watchdogs" who oppose everything in town

5. Opposition is personal and attacks the staff or leadership

6. The community is changing and the old town doesn't like the new town

7. An organized "any tax is a bad tax" group targets a 'No' vote

8. Nostalgia for the old building (just for building projects, of course)

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Engage the Opposition

"If you are worried about opposition, engage them early. It is your responsibility as a public body to tell the taxpayers how their money is being spent. Invite the opposition - either active or potential - in early to look at the libraries finances. Help them ask questions and be transparent with your answers. If they continue to obstruct the process, there is help available. But the earlier you can answer their questions and possibly address their concerns, the better."

- Before the Ballot (2019)

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Informational Communications Campaign Steps

On the Path to the Ballot

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Building Voter Support For Libraries

On the Path…

Before you file the ballot questions with the Clerk of Elections, all of your work with the community, with stakeholders, and with organizations is part of an open, transparent, and consultative process that is focused on your financial or facilities plan (Plan A / Plan B).

60 Months Out – Engaged Planning

1. Engage advisors - legal, financial, facilities

2. ID Timeline for "fundable" strategic or building plan

3. Collaboratively plan with board and staff

4. Coordinate with internal stakeholders (Friends and Foundation)

5. Approach key external partners about budget/facilities issues

6. Identify potential opposition and begin to engage

7. Identify marketing and communications shortfalls

8. Poll or survey

36 Months Out - Surfacing

1. Continue to consult your advisors (legal, financial, facilities)

2. Identify organizations, agencies, and stakeholders who also care about the same populations or place

3. Workshop specific values-based messaging for each group

4. Talk about opposition and concerns; engage

5. Train your Community Engagement Team and deploy

6. Coordinate with internal stakeholders (Friends and Foundation)

7. Marketing to raise awareness and build support

8. Poll or survey

18 Months Out - Refinement

1. Develop the Draft "Plan A" and "Plan B"

2. Revisit the organizations, agencies, and stakeholder groups who share a common cause or common concern

3. Refine specific values-based messaging for each group

4. Talk about opposition and concerns

5. Continue to work through technical issues with advisors

6. Train inside stakeholders on budget or building issues

7. Marketing to build support

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Building Voter Support For Libraries

12 Months Out - Commitment

1. Legal and financial considerations; Ballot language and vetting

2. Insert campaign info into regular communications

3. Set up campaign social media calendar

4. Meet with Press and PR for external relations

5. Staff and board training on budget or building issues

6. Schedule meetings presentations with organizations, agencies, and stakeholders

7. Poll or survey

6 Months Out - Engagement

1. Legal memo to staff and board

2. Filing(s) with Clerk of Elections

3. Prep library website landing page for Plan A and Plan B information-only

4. In-library print materials for Info Only Communications Campaign

5. Press and PR for external relations

6. Protocol for answering questions and engaging misinformation

7. Train staff and board for patron interactions

8. Host meetings and make presentations

Last 3 Months

After you file with the Clerk, all of your outreach - usually last 3- 4 months before Election Day - must be neutral about the outcome of the vote, but must also be clear about what happens if the measure passes (Plan A) and if the measure fails (Plan B).

Colorado Specific Resources

2019 Election Calendar
https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/calendars/2019ElectionCalendar.pdf

COMPLYING WITH THE FAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICES ACT (FCPA)
http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/fcpalibraries

Friends and Foundations

The role for your 501(c)3 in the campaign

What Can a 501(c)3 Do in a Campaign?

1. Fundraise and donate to Yes Campaign committee (20% rule)
2. Pay for polling and surveys about taxes
3. Endorse the Ballot Measure and communicate about that endorsement
4. Lend donor lists to Yes Campaign
5. Donate to support library's marketing efforts and not just programs
6. Donate unrestricted funds to library for Informational Communications Campaign materials

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C3 Focus on Election Day

"Election Day is likely the library's biggest fundraising day of your year - or for a generation. Your partners in a Friends group and Foundation should all be pulling in the same direction. Even large donors want to their donations add capacity to the budget, not replace it."

- Before the Ballot (2019)

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What About the Yes Committee?
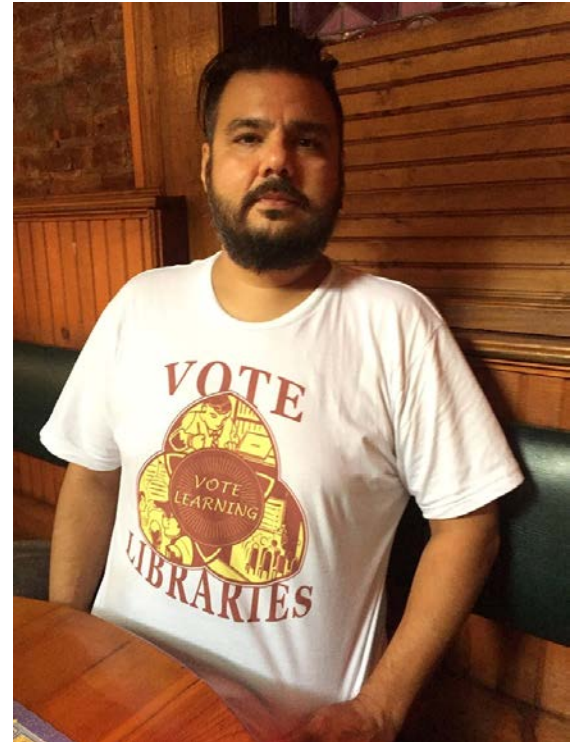
Not On Public Time....

Final Thoughts…

Come back around to how people listen

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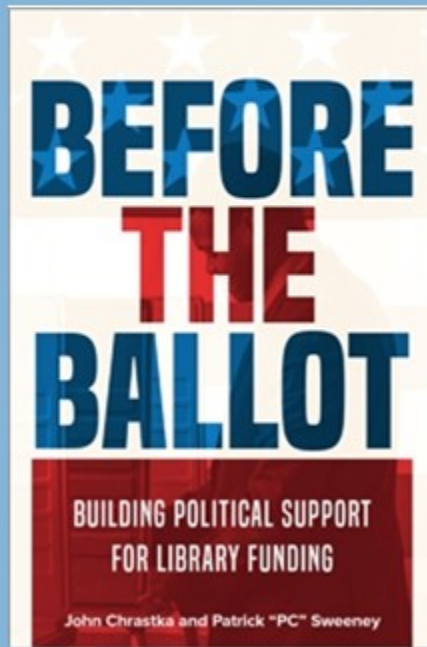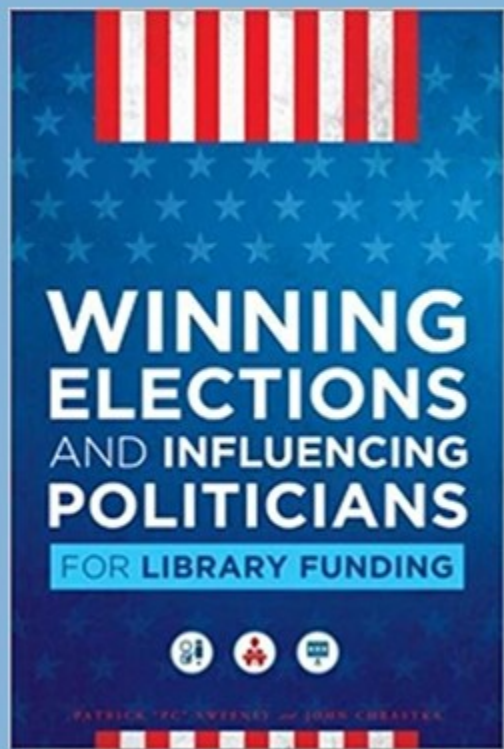
Four Kinds of Stories

- Personal/Organizational stories about successes that emphasize values.

- Personal/Organizational stories of failures that demonstrate integrity.

- Stories about other people who are important to you.

- Stories about what "why you do what you do".

FURTHER LEARNING
ALAstore.ALA.org

WINNING ELECTIONS AND INFLUENCING POLITICIANS FOR LIBRARY FUNDING

PATRICK "PC" SWEENEY and JOHN CHRASTKA

BEFORE THE BALLOT

BUILDING POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR LIBRARY FUNDING

John Chrastka and Patrick "PC" Sweeney

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Building Voter Support For Libraries

Thank You

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