

Talking Points

Those in the library community know that the library is the solution to so many problems exacerbated by a tough economy, but sometimes it's difficult to articulate that message. The following talking points are filled with statistics and data to help make the case for your library quickly, concisely and accurately, whether you're talking to your neighbor, a school board, your mayor or the media.

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1. Why Support Your Local Library

Libraries provide an invaluable service to the communities they serve. While all libraries are unique, they all share a few core principles that guide their service. These core principles form the foundation that makes libraries a public good.

- Libraries provide equal access to information for people of all ages and backgrounds.
- Libraries promote lifelong learning and literacy.
- Libraries preserve our culture and history for future generations.

- Libraries bring people and ideas together. Think of the library as the living room of your community.
- Libraries are unique. Where else can you have access to nearly anything on CD, DVD, the Web or in print – as well as personal service and assistance in finding it?
 - In a world where knowledge is power, libraries make everyone more powerful.
- Libraries don't just offer the hardware, but also offer the expertise of librarians in helping teach people how to use the Internet and find the information they need quickly. While Google can give you 50,000 responses to your inquiry, your librarian can help you find the one answer you need.
- Libraries are part of the American Dream. They offer free access to all. They bring opportunity to all.
- Libraries and librarians provide free and equal access to information for people of all ages and backgrounds – in schools, on college and university campuses and in communities large and small.
 - Libraries are for everyone, everywhere.

2. Libraries and the Economy

In times of economic hardship, Americans depend on their libraries. Libraries routinely see an increase in circulation and use of facilities during tough economic times.

- In times of economic hardship, Americans turn to – and depend on – their libraries and librarians.
- Libraries are part of the solution when a community is struggling economically. They provide free access to books and entertainment for families, and help local businesses by providing meeting spaces, and technology training workshops.
- A library is an investment in a community's future.
- Libraries are America's great information equalizers – the only place people of all ages and backgrounds can find and freely use such a diversity of resources, along with the expert guidance of librarians.
- To combat the economic downturn, libraries design and offer programs tailored to meet local community economic needs. Libraries can provide residents with career advisers, workshops in resume writing and interviewing, job-search resources, and connections with outside agencies that offer training and job placement.
- During times of economic downturn, libraries see more users because people cut back on entertainment. People are able to rent movies for free and check out CDs, use databases and download audio books.
- When the economy is down, library use is up. Unfortunately, at the same time, tight city and state budgets are closing library doors and reducing access when it's needed most.

3. Library Funding

According to the 2012 State of America's Libraries Report, nearly 60% of public libraries reported flat or decreased operating budgets in 2010–2011. Nationally, 16% of local libraries reported decreased operating hours; and for the third year in a row, the greatest impact was experienced by those living in urban communities: Nearly one-third of urban libraries reported reductions in hours. Academic libraries have faced similar budget reductions, and those matters are complicated by the rising cost of resources.

- Millions of people pass through the library each year, but without adequate funding, these resources might not be there when you need them.
- Like many Americans, due to the recent economic downturn, many libraries are being forced to do more with less.
- Libraries in almost every state have been affected by state funding cuts.
- Librarians know shrinking budgets demand a lot of hard choices be made. When it comes time to make those decisions, we need to ask elected officials and the public to think about how many people turn to us for job searches, free Internet access, health care information and for free resources for education and career development.
- Your ability to get information shouldn't depend on your ability to pay for it.
- If people speak up and speak out they can save their libraries.

Quotable Facts about America's Libraries:

- College libraries receive just less than three cents of every dollar spent on higher education.
- Americans spend over 18 times as much money on home video games (\$18.6 billion) as they do on school library materials for their children (\$1 billion).
- School libraries spend an average of \$12.06 per student on library media—about two-thirds the cost of a single fiction title (\$17.63) or about one-third the cost of a single non-fiction title (\$27.04).
- If the cost of People magazine had risen as fast as the cost of academic library periodicals since 1990, it would cost about \$182 for a one-year subscription.
- There are 584 students enrolled for every librarian in 2- and 4-year colleges and universities in 2010 the U.S. as compared with 14 students for each teaching faculty member.

4. Library Use

Despite decreasing budgets, libraries across American have seen an increase in usage.

- 58% of adults in the U.S. have public library cards.
- Americans visit libraries more than 1.3 billion times and check out more than 2.1 billion items each year. Users turn to their libraries for free books, to borrow DVDs, to learn new computer skills, to conduct job searches and more.
- A 2012 poll conducted for the American Library Association found that 94% of respondents agreed that public libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed because they provide free access to materials and resources.
- More than 92% of public libraries provide services for job seekers.
- Nearly all Americans (96 percent) – even if they are not regular library visitors – agree that libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed. They support our public education and lifelong learning.
- Reference librarians in the nation's public and academic libraries answer nearly 6.6 million questions weekly. Standing single file, the line of questioners would span from Ocean City, MD to Juneau, AK.

Quotable Facts about America's Libraries:

- There are more public libraries than McDonald's in the U.S.—a total of 16,766 including branches.
- Americans go to school, public and academic libraries more than three times more often than they go to the movies.
- Americans check out more than eight books a year, on the average. They spend \$35.81 a year for the public library—about the average cost of one hardcover book.
- Americans spend nearly three times as much on candy as they do on public libraries.

5. Libraries and Technology

Libraries provide an invaluable resource for job seekers, as many patrons rely on the library as their only means of accessing the internet.

- Almost 89% of public library outlets now offer wireless Internet access. According to the FCC, over 80 percent of Fortune 500 companies require that a job application be completed online. Patrons turn to library computers and Internet access to find work, apply for jobs online, type resumes and cover letters and open email accounts.
- Nearly 73% of libraries are their communities' only source of free computer and Internet access. This number increases to 82% in rural areas.
- Libraries help bridge the divide between those who have access to information and those who do not. Families making less than \$15,000 annually are two to three times more likely to rely on library computers than those earning more than \$75,000.

Quotable Facts about America's Libraries:

- Academic libraries held approximately 158.7 million e-books and public libraries held more than 18.5 million in 2010.
- A 2011 Pew study found that about 24% of library card holders had read e-books in the past year. Of them, 57% preferred borrowing e-books and about 33% preferred purchasing them.
- The 2011-2012 ALA Libraries Connect Communities study reported that 76.3% of libraries reported offering e-books, an increase of 9% from 2010-2011.

6. Economic Value of Libraries

Libraries are among the most effective of all public services, serving more than 2/3rds of the public with less than 2 percent of all tax dollars. A number of recent studies have shown that libraries are among the most effective types of public service, and that libraries routinely provide a positive return on investment.

- Investing in libraries is an investment in education and lifelong learning.
- Libraries are among the most effective of all public services, serving more than 2/3rds of the public with less than 2 percent of all tax dollars.
- Public libraries are a bargain. Nationally, the average cost to the taxpayer for access to this wide range of public-library resources is \$31 a year, about the cost of one hardcover book.

Return on investment examples:

- Seattle, WA – Visits to the new public library have increased King County tourism. Increased tourism of one percent yields \$1 billion in new economic activity statewide over 25 years.

- In Maryland, 90 percent of the state's citizens say public libraries are "a good investment." More than 40 percent of the citizens think of public libraries as an economic anchor, potentially attracting "good businesses" to their area.
- In Florida, for every dollar of public support spent on public libraries, income or wages increases by \$12.66, and returned \$6.54 for every dollar invested.
- In South Carolina, the total direct and indirect return on investment for every \$1 spent on the state's public libraries by South Carolina state and local governments is \$4.48 - nearly 350 percent.

Taken from the [ALA website](#).