

1 Introduction

“Libraries on the Agenda” was the theme of the author while President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions for the years 2007 to 2009 to mobilise librarians and information professionals to take action in the political arena and to put libraries on the agenda of political decision-makers in order to advocate for a better development of libraries.

In 2022 the author’s practical handbook on lobbying for libraries was published in German, *Praxishandbuch Richtige Lobbyarbeit für Bibliotheken* (Lux 2022). This book, *Libraries on the Agenda*, is based on the German publication and is in many parts a direct translation, altogether more than half of the original text. However, as the political federal structure in Germany is quite different from many other countries, many of the specific lobbying activities in Germany are not part of this volume. The author has tried to integrate international advocacy stories by conducting additional interviews with outstanding library advocates at the international level whose experience is reflected in many parts of this book. Overall, it is estimated that up to one third of the material is new compared to the German version.

Advocacy for libraries can evoke approval but also protest; approval because most librarians and information professionals believe it is important for libraries to receive more attention and political affection, primarily in the form of better funding, while protest against advocacy can arise because librarians and information professionals, with their positive self-image of providing information to all citizens, do not want to be dragged into the dirty business of lobbying. Library advocacy is thus about lobbying for libraries without doing the dirty work of lobbyists, which is why the word “advocacy” is used in this book. The extent to which advocacy is possible, and whether it is possible at all, is explained in this book. In doing so, it is necessary to describe the various aspects of politics in which action is taken for or against libraries and information institutions.

Step by step, this book will not only demonstrate the need for library advocacy to policymakers, but also provide useful tips on how to successfully advocate for libraries at different levels of government: in the community, in the university, in an institution or even at the national level. The basics of political structures are explained, which is essential knowledge for effective advocacy, while the role of libraries in society is described for library advocacy, with an attempt made to develop suggestions from this particular point of view. It is impressive that we can now report on many successful advocacy activities for libraries worldwide, and that libraries are developing more and more convincing arguments for their role in society. Most of the examples are from public or commu-

nity libraries, which is understandable as there are three times more public libraries than academic and research libraries worldwide, but many examples are useful for all types of libraries.

There are 19 chapters in this book. This introduction is followed by Chapter 2, which describes the terms lobbying and advocating in more detail, providing a definition and a precise boundary for library advocacy. Chapter 3, on library policy, explains what library policy is and how advocacy relates to it, with the elements of politics – power, policy-making, values – placed in a library policy context. Chapter 4 attempts to present the role of libraries in society and to explain the ethical principles specific to the profession in order to provide arguments for libraries that are needed in library advocacy. Chapter 5 briefly outlines the five levels of political decision-making, from local to international, as knowledge of the political structure is the most important basis for any advocacy activity. Chapter 6 looks at the main policy areas for library advocacy and shows where it goes beyond cultural and educational policy. Chapter 7 begins with a description of current advocacy issues at the international level, with the focus on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG) and their relevance to libraries; this is based on a detailed description of the opportunities for libraries offered by the Sustainable Development Goals, as developed by IFLA. Chapter 8 briefly presents the main issues of library advocacy at intergovernmental levels such as the African Union or the European Union. Chapter 9 describes library advocacy activities at national level and regional levels to show how library stakeholders can influence the regulations and laws that are important to them. Chapter 10 looks at advocacy at the local level, which is less about legislation and more about the involvement of public libraries in important social issues that are negotiated in local communities. Chapter 11 briefly discusses some specific aspects of advocacy for academic libraries, special libraries and school libraries within their institutions. Chapter 12 explains how to use government strategies and political party goals for library advocacy. Chapter 13 focuses on active advocacy by library associations and how they encourage their members to advocate. The role of friends of the library, library boards and user groups in advocacy is discussed in Chapter 14. Chapter 15 presents examples of successful advocacy from a variety of sources, with this chapter based on several expert interviews with people who have been successful in advocating for libraries. In addition to the successes, Chapter 16 presents the failures of library advocacy to learn from the pitfalls of advocacy. Finally, in Chapter 17 you will find a compilation of advocacy tips, drawn from the experiences of many people; they are not intended to be exhaustive and rather are tips that have emerged from various examples (in fact, many tips for advocating are hidden in other parts of the book and should not be repeated here). Tips are also given in Chapter 18, as all interviewees were

asked to give their best advice on advocacy. In the final chapter, Chapter 19, the author tries to present a brief outlook on the future of successful advocacy for libraries.

This book can be read in any way, not necessarily from beginning to ending, with no particular order necessary to learn the essential aspects of library advocacy. In each chapter, important and relevant knowledge from other chapters is pointed out or a short summary is given; depending on how much time you have, you can decide whether you want to read the additional and background information on policy. For those who read this book strictly from cover to cover, there are short repetitions and summaries, which should also make systematic reading easier.

Special thanks are due to the following nineteen people who supported this book by making themselves available for interviews about their own experiences of advocacy, thereby greatly enriching this work: Hans-Erich Au, Rashidah Begum, Carolina Botero Cabrera, Thomas Bürger, Andreas Degkwitz, Tuula Haavisto, Rolf Hapel, Eric Hattke, Li Donglai, Elmar Mittler, Jennefer Nicholson, Liv Sæteren, Barbara Schleihagen, Bernd Schmid-Ruhe, Gene Tan, Ellen R. Tise, Hannelore Vogt, Wu Jianzhong and Stephen Wyber. The author would also like to thank the Humboldt University Library and the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin for their unlimited support during the COVID-19 pandemic, both physically and digitally. The author would like to express her gratitude to the Open Access Team of the Humboldt University Library for their financial support in the publication of this book in an open-access format.

Any errors are the responsibility of the author, who is aware that some of the examples will be out of date before the book is published and has tried repeatedly to show the underlying principles of successful advocacy. Making librarians and information professionals more aware of advocacy has also been the aim of her many years of lecturing on library policy at the Berlin School of Library and Information Science at the Humboldt University of Berlin, on which this work is based. For anyone who wants to advocate for libraries, this book aims to provide many examples of how to successfully engage in library advocacy to achieve one crucial goal: to put libraries on the agenda!

Claudia Lux
Berlin, February 2024