

19 The Future of Advocacy for Libraries

Based on the status of library advocacy today, there are several key points that need to be considered for the future. Advocacy with policy-makers is still seen as undesirable and this needs to change fundamentally for libraries in the future. Every library, even the smallest, has something positive to offer its funders and policy-makers that is worthy of advocacy by library management. As NGOs now engage in professional advocacy for their public interest goals, there are plenty of role models. Library advocacy is a commitment to a good cause that also serves the common good and in the future more librarians and information professionals will engage in advocacy to get the best out of their institution, with the clear conviction that it is library users who will benefit most. In the future, policy advocacy will be viewed more positively in the library sector and will be seen as a natural management task for large and small libraries, for public, academic and special libraries and for school libraries. There will be more courses and reports on how to do advocacy successfully, so that everyone can start their advocacy activities well trained.

Advocacy for libraries is a form of active democratic participation by librarians who do not wait to be called to expert circles and rather openly and confidently explain why libraries can play a positive role in many areas of society. Libraries help to alleviate social problems, support education and research, and provide opportunities for development for all. Advocacy for libraries is for the common good, in all aspects, and has nothing to do with lobbying in shady backroom meetings or with bribery, as this book makes very clear. This negative image of lobbyists does not apply to library advocates. Libraries provide services that support the educational and personal development of others, which is the goal that guides all librarians and information professionals in their advocacy work.

Successful advocacy for libraries starts with a personal attitude. Those who have only seen a negative image of political advocacy, between the clinical mask deals and the champagne glass, will have to come to terms with the political reality that advocacy has become part of democratic decision-making and that even in non-democratic countries it is part of the success of libraries. It is an opportunity for library staff to actively represent the interests of their profession and its users, which requires a deep knowledge of the political structures in the country in question. It also enables librarians and information professionals to assess responsibilities and competencies to bring suggestions and demands to the right relevant body. Understanding the basics of politics, the relationship between power, policy-making and values, will help to assess the interests and actions of other participants in active discussion processes.

The three basic elements of politics – power, policy-making and values – help to classify political decisions and actions. At the same time, they also offer the opportunity to plan one's own advocacy activities realistically. There are few moments when advocacy for libraries can be so entrenched that counteraction, from whatever quarter, cannot find a foothold; this only happens when the goals of library advocacy are so closely aligned with the goals of policy-makers that opposing forces have no chance, the moment when the librarian's concern has become the politician's wish. Only in such an environment can the library powerfully implement all its projects without being hindered or having to make restrictive compromises. In the future, power will rarely play a role in library advocacy. On the other hand, as in the past, shaping policy will be the main focus of library advocacy. In almost all areas, in both large and small libraries, the success of library issues depends on the ability to influence policy at all levels and argue and negotiate with conflicting interests. In recent years, a wide range of rationales has emerged to support the positive role of libraries in society, with some of these now policy, such as the "library as a third place". Successful examples of libraries in many countries have contributed to this, with the "library as a third place" responding to the desire for a neutral and non-commercial meeting place in the community or within the university, which includes a digital world of knowledge and the opportunity to learn all necessary skills in this place. In addition, there is the analogue collection in a traditional form but with up-to-date knowledge, offering a hybrid world that will continue to shape our time and the near future.

Policy-making in the political sphere also means making compromises to move towards the desired goals step by step. Advocacy for libraries in the context of policy-making is always a long process that requires a lot of patience, but a ray of hope for successful library advocacy lies in the third basic element of policy: values. Libraries have an inexhaustible store of political and social values, and in the future these can be given greater prominence to enrich the rational arguments for libraries. Values play an important role in politics, are present in all party programmes and are used time and time again. The values that libraries hold, which are presented in both policy papers and library policies, are a powerful asset for library advocacy; if these basic political elements are considered in future political advocacy, it will enable more conscious and targeted action. In addition to the three basic elements of politics, the variety of policy areas in which libraries can play a role becomes apparent. Based on new terms such as "internet policy", it is likely that artificial intelligence and media changes and developments will create new policy areas in the future that will influence the provision and management of libraries. In these new policy areas, influence can be exerted from the outset to position libraries, their services and their users clearly and to help influence policy decisions in these areas.

With the change to participatory institutions, libraries will continue to consolidate their role in society. However, it must always be made clear in which areas libraries can provide services for society; only when libraries are involved in social and political strategies will they be able to show how they fulfil these tasks. It is no coincidence that one of the recurring political demands is for libraries to be involved in strategies to harness their capacity to support social change. In this way, libraries build on their image in society – an image of trust in libraries that they must not disappoint. A clear stance against fake news, consistent clarification of the facts and training of users to recognise false information will remain an important part of library work in the future to maintain trust. Respectful interaction and equal treatment of library users form the basis of this trust and are part of the ethical principles for librarians and information professionals, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the basis for this. The professional ethical principles for librarians and the values library people support will become increasingly important; in heated social debates, these principles define that the selection of media is the sole responsibility of librarians, with any influence by third parties on this decision to be rejected. This is one reason why censorship is unacceptable for libraries. Librarians reject censorship on ethical grounds, with this clear stance the only way to rule out future influence for political reasons.

In order to better represent the interests of libraries, it is necessary to understand the political structure at each level of advocacy. The responsibilities for libraries at local, regional, national and international levels should be known and changes that may occur in the future should be closely monitored; only in this way can there be clarity about the right negotiating partner for libraries. Looking at the different levels of library advocacy, the question arises as to what influences librarians and information professionals will be exposed to in the future. There is no doubt that climate change will become even more pervasive, and we cannot wait to see what comes next; the UN Sustainable Development Goals are future policy goals that can only be achieved through immediate action. With IFLA's comprehensive explanations of the SDGs and how to use them, all libraries have a framework for their actions and contributions to society. Advocating for these goals also means advocating for a better political perception of libraries in the future, which in turn is a prerequisite for involving libraries in long-term social strategies. The arguments are there.

In the future, there will be many more good examples of how libraries can put the UN Sustainable Development Goals into practice. All that is missing is a library policy strategy at international and national level to show how these library activities can lead to greater visibility in the policy arena. Activities at the European level will continue to be strongly influenced by copyright, as in other

regions of the world, and library advocacy will continue to monitor the influences and developments on this issue; this will lead to new actions to continue to work together for fair copyright worldwide. In the area of digitisation, European libraries are applying for EU funding to support the digital development of libraries across the European Union. Elsewhere, in the African Union and ASEAN, the same digitisation has started and will be developed, which is the only way to secure the social role of libraries in the future. Digitisation and fair copyright, adapted to the digital world, are the two key issues for the future that will determine library advocacy worldwide.

The different levels of government – federal, state and local – have clearly defined responsibilities for libraries and cooperate only to a very limited extent. The relationship between library associations and their governments at different levels may change significantly in the future as new political priorities determine economic and social development, with much depending on the extent to which it is possible not only to implement the issues of climate change and digitisation for libraries, but also to raise awareness at the political level of how libraries can contribute. Contacts should be developed with both governing parties and opposition groups, however, their effectiveness in influencing government action depends on many factors. It will be essential to successfully communicate the clear demands of libraries in all political areas, with new political decision-makers and new collaborations with institutions and associations inevitably coming into play.

Local libraries will continue to be as diverse as they have always been, while new initiatives should motivate public librarians to further strengthen their advocacy power. Political advocacy is key to the further development of libraries, and public librarians will not miss the opportunity to influence politicians for the benefit of public libraries and their users. Sometimes the activation of a group of friends of the library can support libraries in such a way that they no longer need the municipal political level to initiate successful developments, which is exactly what makes them interesting again for local politicians. There are many ways to Rome, but the first step, taken by the public libraries themselves, is crucial.

Libraries within institutions, such as academic libraries, special libraries, and school libraries, have their own rules for advocacy, with examples showing that sometimes city and state politicians can be additional contacts and that personal concerns can be addressed. In the future, academic libraries will not be spared the advocacy activities of persuading the institution to be well funded, which is a recurring task with every new university management. As long as there are sufficient numbers of users, they will not need to make many additional arguments, and even if there is a decline in use, it should be remembered that this can be an opportunity for fundamental renewal; the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, has increased digital orientation and opened additional opportunities for faster ex-

pansion. Elsewhere, special libraries must always make it clear within their organisation what the library stands for and what tasks it supports and facilitates; advocacy will continue to be part of their daily business. School libraries, meanwhile, are in need of more support for advocacy activities, as their situation is often difficult.

Knowing the political structure of the country and the responsibility for libraries is not the only important aspect of library advocacy. One should also be interested in the individual parties in parliament, as they accumulate certain ideas and solutions to social problems that are shared by many people; these parties' political statements, values and ideas can be found in concrete policies and in their programmes. The strategies of the government are central to all advocacy goals, as they must fit into the strategy and should support some aspects of the advocacy. Once the library's own advocacy goal has been defined, alignment with the interests of policymakers and adaptation to their situation is central to further success; politicians will only be accepting if the library project offers solutions to real problems, after which the ideas of the political parties, their values and goals must be correctly assessed so that they can be used to argue for one's own concerns. In the run-up to the next elections, it will be important to see what the political parties say when librarians ask them about their policies. Libraries can use the election touchstones to make a good case for their role in society and to provide the party representatives answering the questions with a good basic knowledge of libraries; the standard they set in their answers can also be applied to future governing parties. However, the fact that positions change depending on whether the parties are in opposition or in a governing coalition will certainly not change in the future.

Library associations and their representatives are actors in library advocacy. At least as important are the library managers who – whether they call it advocacy or not – convince their administrations and political decision-makers in the daily struggle for the interests of their libraries. Every library manager is a potential actor in advocacy. Because they are responsible for their institutions, library managers can develop the best arguments and the greatest energy because they want to achieve something very concrete. Convincing examples of library advocacy have been and will be presented, which can help to avoid mistakes in the process and to try more. One of the key issues for all actors is patience and persistence, without which no advocacy activity will be successful; with these actors, the future of library advocacy can be positively shaped. Indeed, over the last 20 years, library advocacy has developed remarkably, with many more actors and associations and the younger generation who is more willing to engage with politicians. More and more librarians and information professionals are becoming

active in advocacy, supporting big issues or small actions to improve libraries and their role in society.

However, there are still white spots on the map of library advocacy in the world. For example, what are the reasons for librarians' reluctance to engage in confident and successful advocacy? It is suggested that it has to do with a rejection of politics, as some people have been socialised with a rather negative attitude towards it. Could it also be that too much proximity to politics is rejected because the library, as a neutral institution, does not want to be monopolised by one political party or another? Librarians want to offer their users an open house for everyone, and do not want to see their independence restricted in the choice of media, making them therefore careful to minimise the political influence on the library. However, this should not be an argument against library advocacy; independence can also be maintained in library advocacy because it is what the professional ethics of librarians and information professionals offer to all professionals, the values that librarians represent, and which should also form the basis for cooperation with policymakers.

What advocacy issues will be crucial in the future? Advocacy issues are very often long-term issues that require a lot of patience and even more enthusiasm, which can come up again and again over several decades. But even short-term issues, such as the bookmobile in Cologne, can sometimes only be successfully negotiated with good advocacy skills. Advocacy for libraries is always necessary, especially in difficult times, such as after a pandemic or an economic crisis. When public funds for culture and education become scarce, when budgets are being cut everywhere and jobs are being lost, the difference between libraries that are firmly anchored in the life of their political decision-makers and the others will become apparent. It is anyone's guess what challenges and advocacy issues we will face in the coming years; today advocacy is a natural management task in public and academic libraries, but in many places there is a lack of practical experience or a structured approach. The issues and examples in this book can help one to learn from the activities of others, so that librarians and information professionals around the world are motivated to successfully put libraries on the agenda.

