



Library Advocacy: A modified mini MOOC (with cats)

Hi everyone,
I'm talking to you today about advocacy – one of the most important aspects of library work

So why am I talking to you about it? Why listen to me?? Well..you're not really listening to my content – I did the Library Unshushed MOOC last year which was amazing. I'm also chairing the LIANZA Working Group on advocacy – we're certainly looking for new members, so if this talk makes you interested in advocating for NZ Libraries, come and have a chat to me.

Did anybody do this MOOC last year? Just so I know if you'll know if I'm making things up? I totally recommend that if you get the chance to do this, do it. It's fantastic.

Also. I've added my cats – Carter and Stella. Because, let's face it. They're cool, and I'm a crazy cat lady. It was fun to try and get the random cat photos I have on my phone into relevant slides..it doesn't really work, but hey – why not. Plus then I don't need to credit any photos.

This is really the briefest of introductions, because there is just sooo much I could tell you, and I'm having to limit myself a bit! But, this should be enough of an introduction that you realise that you need to be advocates for your library, and for libraries in general.

What is advocacy?



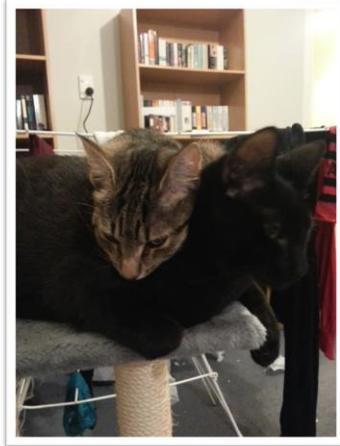
So – let's start with the basics...

What is advocacy??

What is NOT advocacy?

What do you think advocacy is? Have a quick 2 minute chat to your neighbour.

Advocacy is..



To define advocacy, we also need to define a couple of other terms and make sure we understand the distinction between advocacy, lobbying, promotion and marketing..



Promotion: This is who we are. This is what we do. Here's how to get it, and when, and where, plus we're awesome. It's not asking, it's telling

This is my team at the Te Puke Spring Festival on the 1st of November (and my cat in the washing basket) It was a community day, basically bringing the community together for a bit of a market day, community groups had stalls, there were groups performing etc...nobody had considered that the Library should have a stall..even though we're a free community service...so, I got a stall, and we spent the day drawing people in, getting them to guess how many lollies were in a jar, and filling out a competition on "Where do you think the library will be in 10 years" and "what does LIBRARY mean to you" (we gave away tablets so people decided it was worth it)....our stall was full all day and we got lots of comments on how great it was to see the Library at an event like this. Our aim for the day – talk to people. My team is all introverts, so I was extra proud of how well they did, literally talking to people ALL day.

So – not advocacy, but still very important obviously.

Marketing is..

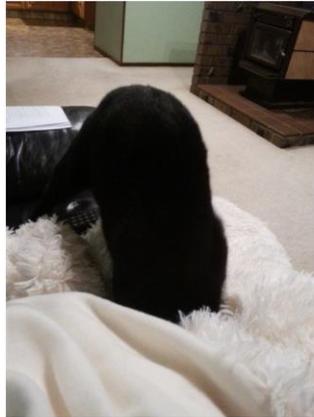


Marketing is different – it asks - what are your needs and preferences? And, how should we change to meet these needs?

Example – when I was at NZICA Library, we used to attend accounting conferences – you can imagine how thrilling they were. But – that was how we could find out what it was that the members needed..by talking to them. This was how we could send out reading lists afterwards of books and papers that the speakers had mentioned – because we knew what was needed. Also, awesome way to see the country.

It's things like surveying your teachers and making sure you're aware of when they're studying particular topics in the curriculum. It's asking kids what they want from their library and then going out and getting it. It's targeted promotion really.

Lobbying is..



Lobbying is usually urgent and something has gone wrong or could go wrong – so we need to fix it..it's things like stopping public libraries cutting their hours, or the changes to the Services to Schools from the National Library.

It may not mean you've had your head in the sand..but, it's an urgent thing, with a very clear goal in place and everybody has to work quickly with a deadline.

Advocacy



It's relationships

So – advocacy is related to both promotion and marketing but an advocate is generally seeking to influence a issue. While people think that advocates might be protesters, the reality is that the truly successful advocates and patiently and carefully building relationships and understandings with the people who make decisions. It's like they're marketing the issue – they're presenting what they want..their cause, in a way that will speak to the decision makers...

As Library advocates we need to start creating relationships and understandings as day to day work, BEFORE we need something. It's a matter of making sure that everybody knows we're relevant, important and valuable ALL THE TIME – not just in a crisis.

It's not about increasing Library use. It's not about increasing circulation stats. It's not about getting more students through your door. These are all important and great of course, but they're not advocacy. It's not about emergency lobbying – also very important..but not advocacy.

Successful advocacy is about effecting change, and it does take time – because it all comes down to relationships of credibility and trust – which need knowledge, communication skills, passion and courage. Like Rachel Hunter says – it won't happen overnight, but it will happen...

Being an effective advocate



All advocacy begins with a bone deep conviction and a personal decision – “I have a role and a responsibility to be an advocate”.

The most successful advocates are respected, trusted, and people like them....let’s face it, you’re going to do something for someone you like, more than you would for somebody you don’t like..

You might not like your decision maker, you might not like playing the game- but at the end of the day..you gotta be likable and trustworthy.

The reality is that people don’t always care as much about libraries as we want them to. Money is tight. That won’t change. Budgets will be cut. You will be expected to ‘do more with less’. That’s life. Accept it, move on, get on with it.

The more deeply and productively embedded you are in the actual activity of a community, the greater the opportunity for your knowledge and skills to be seen, which in turn shows the true potential and relevance of libraries to be visible and relevant. This means that you need to be involved in your school activities at all levels wherever possible.

Principles of influence: Reciprocation, commitment & consistency, social proof (are others doing this) – be liked! Be authoritative, even if it’s not rational. Be strategic, not scattershot. Tell your story simply and compellingly.

You scratch their back, they’ll scratch yours.

I think it's also really important to be a good advocate for future librarians. The kids you're working with at the moment will be the decision makers once day. They'll be principals, parents, possibly politicians (maybe not all of them..). If their memory of librarians is grumpy bunheads who tell them to shush all the time..well, they're not going to look fondly at the librarians who they're working with as grown ups. We all have a responsibility to make sure that our interactions with everybody are positive – being friendly, and good at your job is a really good, simple way of being an advocate.

Perceptions



Books.
Books.
Books.

Libraries – we're about books right?

Very frustrating when people think that – but, we have to remember that that has been the Libraries brand for years. Like, thousands of years... We know that's not the case..but...not everybody knows that...I bet a lot of us think accounting is just numbers...(It kind of is...) but – accountants have had to change as time has gone on, just like us...

The values that bind librarianship are timeless, we're more than books – we know that. But at the end of the day, we have to start with the perceptions of the audience, rather than starting with the awesome stuff we know. So, a really important starting point is understanding the perceptions of our community. What do people think you do???? What does your Principal think you do on a day to day basis? What does your Board of Trustees think you do?? If your teachers had to sum up the Library in one sentence, what would they say? It's important that even people who don't use the Library regularly know what the library's value is. Get out there and talk to them.

One of my many missions at the moment is to get to every group in Council and talk to them about what we do. I know that some of the engineers don't care, that the people who look after the dog pounds think it's not relevant, but stuff it. It's 10 minutes of listening to me talk about what the Library does, how vital we are, how we can help them, and how they can use our office if they need to. Everybody needs to know that the Library is important. It's harder to cut the budget of somebody you

know than it is if they're a stranger.. I try and get them to the Library too. Have you got the space for your Board of trustees or PTA to meet in the Library? Bribe them with baking if needed – we're hosting an evening at the public library soon, inviting all the teachers in town (and school librarians) to come down for wine and nibbles and chat about how we can work together.

See – the people that make decisions on where money should go might not use the library, particularly in a school library...they might have the money to buy books when they want to read, they have their own researchers, and they have no need for the library..it's possibly been years since they've been into a Library..and they might not know (and by might, I mean quite probably) know how strongly library users feel about their libraries. We know that the Ministry of Education does not value you enough at a higher level, but what can you do at an individual level in your school?

Talking to decision makers



Librarians who are seen as passionate and involved in the community actively engage super supporters and probable supporters. It is absolutely vital that librarians are upfront, front and centre, with our sleeves rolled up, in the gatherings of our communities. We are seen to be the most effective advocates when we're seen as respected and trusted colleagues by decision makers and influencers. That means get out of the Library and get talking to people all over the school every chance you get. Obviously there's a difference between being interested, helpful and building relationships, and just getting in the way – but, you're all intelligent grown ups, you can figure that out.

We can't just present facts as we see them to decision makers. Facts help, but they won't carry the day. What carries the day is that decision makers already have beliefs, priorities, and experiences. Like we all do, we face any decision with the information we already think we know, and how our gut feels about it. We need to understand that people do things for their own reasons, not our reasons. So – understand their reasons. They might be stupid, (I didn't say that), but – you need to understand it. Tie everything back to the kids. And get other people to talk to the decision makers for you – if a parent is telling you how great their child is doing since they started reading with you, or something similar – ask them to mention it to the PTA, or write a letter. There is a cynical side to everybody who will say "of course you're advocating for school libraries – you want to keep your job"....but if a parent says it, maybe it'll have more sway. Look to the vocal people, the parents who are involved in everything they're the best ones to speak for you. We all know the

statistic around people being much more likely to talk about bad service than good service...so, you want the word spread by as many people as possible, parents, teachers, everyone.

You may need to think outside the box on how to get their attention, and how to stay in their minds – this means leaving the Library – get out there, be in their faces.

Keep an eye on things



You need to use the language that they use, and know what is going on in their worlds. A combination of numbers, and telling a relevant story is a winner. But you need to know what is going on. What's going on in your community? What's going on in the Library? What is your school doing around Future Focused Learning? What's in your Board of Trustees annual report to the Ministry – what are they planning? What are their targets? What's your local public library up to? What about the other school libraries around the place?

Think about what is important to them. An example is story time or holiday programmes. We know that story time (or Little Kiwis as we call it in Te Puke) is important. It's great for parents, it's great for kids. They have big smiles on their faces, we know they take out books after the session, and keep coming back. Cool huh.

I don't know for sure, but if I said that to my boss she'd get this really nice smile on her face, and say "that's nice Christine, really lovely" – she'd mean it of course, she's cool. But... What I want her to say is "of course you can have more money for community engagement. Brilliant! Here, have all the money. Oh, an extra staff member, sure! Have 2"

What I need to do is, is read her KPIs (which are technically mine too)...and talk about it in that language, with a bit extra. So, how meaningful play is increasing the children's reading readiness which will have a major impact on the family literacy

behaviours prior to children starting primary school, and ensure that the children of Te Puke are able to start school on a level playing field, regardless of income levels and ethnicity. That I'm increasing community engagement with parts of the community who Council have not traditionally had good relationships with. That we're developing partnerships and outreach programmes.

Is this what I'm going to say to the local Mums? No – I'll tell them it's free, it's fun, the kids sneakily learn, we have special guests like goats, chickens and lambs, but the main thing is that it's fun and free.

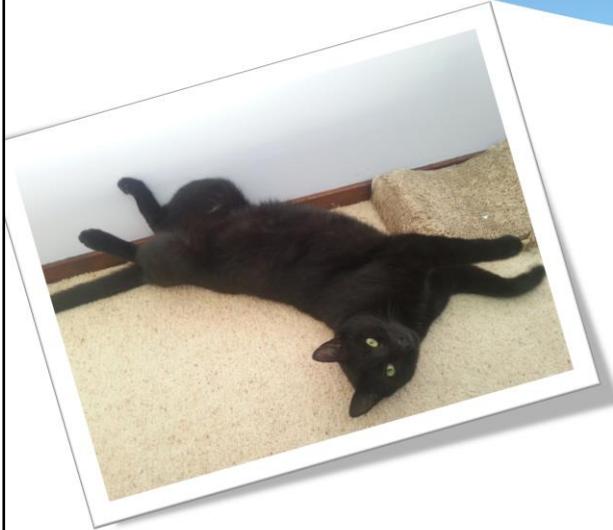
But they're higher up...



So – hierarchy – what is it, if anything, that scares you about this? Because, it can be scary. We're saying that you need to put yourself out there – and get people to do what you want them to. Which isn't easy. Damn free will and all that. I read something recently that said the best thing to do if you're scared of something, is to identify it, and think about it. Don't ignore it. That's why, for kids, if there's a monster under the bed, rather than saying there's not, you're better off to get a spray bottle of monster killer (usually water) and kill the monster.

So, I want you to spend 5 minutes, you can write it down if you want, or just have a think – what is it that scares you? AND...what could you do to change that? You don't need to share this, just have a think.

Don't rest on your laurels



So...we could keep going for hours and hours, but, like good advocacy and story telling, I'm going with less is more.

Tell the story in relation to audience. What do they need to know about? What do they care about? You need to focus on the consumer/decision maker rather than the product – speak to the emotion, not the features. Speak from the heart – it all looks so easy when it works.

Don't sound preachy or self-righteous

Every situation is unique – the context and setting will always be different, so you need to know your setting, your situation and your environment.

- 1) Be proactive
- 2) Be active in your community, as well as your library
- 3) Be opportunistic
- 4) Be prepared
- 5) Principles of influence: Reciprocation, commitment & consistency, social proof (are others doing this) – be liked! Be authoritative, even if it's not rational. Be strategic, not scattershot. Tell your story simply and compellingly.



Our Values

Libraries Aotearoa started with the germ of an idea in 2012 when the LIANZA (Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa) began work to strengthen the library and information profession in New Zealand. Originally dubbed #BrandLibraries the goal of the project was to create an attitudinal shift of people towards Libraries. Cos – we’re cool, but not enough people know that.

Joanna spoke more about this earlier this week, so I won’t go into too much detail – but some of the values that were raised go across all libraries – from special, tertiary and school.

Simplifying complexity – we specialise in navigating through the ever increasing information world.

Continually adaptable – our platform of services, tools, and resources are continually adapting to meet changing needs.

Cultivating relationship – we build the trust needed to develop lasting relationships.

Lifelong learning – we have the capacity to touch people at every point in their life, being there for communities as they grow.

By communities, for communities – every library in New Zealand is driven by the needs of the community it belongs to.

Fair & just – our services are open and accessible to all with no hidden agenda.

Ideas through conversation – we believe personalised communication leads to unexpected inspiration.

Enriching information – We provide context to support sound decision making.

At the Future of Libraries Summit in Wellington at the end of July, a number of issues were raised that librarians around the country and cross sectors felt we needed to work on. Advocacy came up again and again. Promoting what it is that libraries do, why we matter, why librarians are vital for the wellbeing and future of our country. So – this isn't something that's going away.

In conclusion..



Advocacy is of vital importance to ALL libraries in NZ – we need to be working at building relationships and strengthening constantly, not just when we need something. This means talking the talk and walking the walk of the stakeholders and decision makers – LIANZA is starting a working group – the members have told us that advocacy is a really important part of what the Library Association should be doing..so we're going to do it, but we need your help. If you want to chat with me about being part of this exciting new working group, just get in touch. It's not going to be heaps of work but it's going to be really valuable work.

As individuals we're a lone voice. The Australian Library Association ALIA has recently come up with a new programme FAIR (Freedom and Access to information and resources). Sue McKerracher, the CEO of ALIA spoke to the Kotuku group about advocacy – she raised the point that in Australia – librarians only make up about 2% of the total workforce. Not really an overpowering voice. In Australia, there's a number of library associations, both at a national level and a state level. If they cannot work together, or agree on points to make, arguments to take to government – that makes the 'librarians voice' less than 2% of the country...every voice counts, and they need to work together, at an association level, to get that full 2%. They don't have to agree on everything. But for the big things – they need to be able to work together.

We're looking to you to spread the word and advocate for our library users at every age and stage of their lives.

Think of an advocate...



With this information in mind, I want you to spend 5 minutes reflecting on an advocate that you admire and respect – who is it? What characteristics do they have that you think make them a good advocate?

It doesn't need to be a library related example, but spend 5 minutes having a think and jot down some notes – you won't need to share these

Lil Bub is an advocate for cat adoption and shelters in the States. She has helped raise well over \$100,000 for animals in need.

Carter and Stella sleep.

A lot.

