

American Library Association Social Media Toolkit



Effective advocacy through social media begins with strong relationships with local community influencers and elected leaders at the local, state and federal level. Check out these strategies to get your lawmakers attention and advocate for libraries.

The Basics



Research: Use ALA's Action Center to identify and follow your U.S. senators and representatives as well as your state and local policymakers. Be sure to sign up to receive their regular email updates. And read up! What issues are important to your elected leader? What was their profession before their political career? How do their interests intersect with your library's services?



Follow: Elected officials have social media for the same reason they have phone numbers and email: they want to hear from their constituents. By following them, you can track what issues your elected officials are prioritizing as well as upcoming events, town halls, and debates. Tweet (or send an email!) to legislators to introduce (or reintroduce) your library and offer resources to them and their staff.



Follow Up: You might not get a response when you Tweet at your decision-makers or leave your elected officials a comment on their Facebook page, but your message still gets through. When you meet them in person, let them know that you've been interacting with them on social media. When they can connect the messages with the people sending them, they pay attention.

Best Practices on Social Media

- **Balance your content.** Be careful not to overload your followers with too many posts about your campaign. Aim for three posts about your daily library life for every one post about your advocacy campaign.
- **Create a response plan.** Anything could happen during your campaign. Identify the people you will call on if a crisis develops and let them know ahead of time that you may need them to add their voice to the discussion. Maintain a list of who should be notified and the steps you need to respond.
- **Tag after meeting.** If you have an opportunity to speak with an elected official or their staff, express your thanks publicly on social media and tag them on your channels after the meeting. Remember to restate your ask in the post so that the staff can connect the dots!
- **Use pictures.** Lawmakers respond well to photos with their constituents. When possible, include a photo of you with a lawmaker or staff when you tag them in a post.
- **Think globally, act locally.** Make sure to only reach out to the representative for whom you are a constituent; although it may be tempting, reaching out to representatives outside your state or district through social media can have a negative effect.

Facebook Tips for Facebook

- **Like your elected leaders' pages.** Many elected officials have Facebook pages, be sure to 'Like' and 'Follow' them.
- **Mentions and comments.** Use Facebook tags to engage with your elected leaders' official pages. You can do this by tagging them on your own page or by commenting on posts that are related to your library's resources. Are they posting a lot about workforce development? Helping them to connect the dots to makerspaces by leaving a comment!
- **Create photo albums.** Photo albums with descriptions of what is happening and, whenever possible, tie in your advocacy messages. For example: "We had a great community meeting at the library tonight. We need to #FundLibraries to keep these events going!"
- **Keep text brief.** Posts under 90 characters are 4x more likely to go viral and 3x more likely to receive clicks. Give enough to tease the basics and generate a click-through or view.

Tips for Twitter

- **Set standards for hashtags.** If you create a hashtag for a specific issue you would like to convey to your elected official or a full campaign, take time to find out if anyone has used the hashtag before.
- **Retweet strategically.** You can gain attention from your elected officials by retweeting their work and amplifying their voice. You will position yourself as a partner to them on social media, which may help to open the door to other collaborations and support.
- **Mention strategically.** Use no more than 1 tweet per day should you want to engage with your elected official on Twitter.
- **Create a spike.** To demonstrate broad support for an issue, select a “Day of Action” to also have partners or grassroots community get involved. Oftentimes, policymakers pay extra attention to this type of spike in activity. This is especially effective if you can also organize a lots of phone calls or an in-person visit at the same time.

Tips for Instagram

- **Use authentic imagery.** Make sure to share photos and videos taken in your library and community. Use the album feature to highlight series of events and resources. Abstract images or campaign branding can be powerful when tied to an issue position and used consistently.
- **Use locations.** Make posts more discoverable to your elected officials by tagging them with a location. This can be general like a city name or specific address for your library.
- **Tagging.** When applicable, tag your elected officials, partners, or supporters in the image to notify them and continue building the relationship.

Examples to Get You Started

Be sure to download [up-to-date sharing graphics from ala.org/advocacy/social-media](https://ala.org/advocacy/social-media) to accompany your post.



Twitter: *[@ YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL]*, libraries have a profound impact on our communities through the services they provide all constituents across the state. I urge you to *[CAMPAIGN CALL TO ACTION]* *#[CAMPAIGN HASHTAG]*



Facebook: *[@ YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL]*, our community is stronger because of the services libraries provide. We need your help to strengthen our national library system and to continue to spark positive change in *[YOUR STATE]*. Please *[CAMPAIGN CALL TO ACTION]* *#[CAMPAIGN HASHTAG]*



Instagram: Libraries change lives and make communities better! That’s why I advocate on behalf of the American Library Association. I’m working to ensure *[CAMPAIGN CALL TO ACTION]* and to make *[YOUR CITY or STATE]* the best it can. Help me by reaching out to *[YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL]* *#[CAMPAIGN HASHTAG]*

Tips for LinkedIn

- **Optimize “About us” description.** The first 156 characters of a LinkedIn page description are pulled into Google search results as a preview of the page. Keep the description up-to-date with engaging copy relating to your campaigns to avoid using LinkedIn’s default.
- **Share engaging content frequently.** Just like Facebook and Twitter, frequently posting content that demonstrates a specific benefit for your community is a great way to drive engagement. Think about posts that might start a conversation, like relevant policy or information news or thought leadership pieces. It’s a great idea to position yourself as someone who’s informed about the issues and open for discussion!
- **Leverage rich media.** LinkedIn reports that posts with images result in a 98% higher comment rate. Try sharing videos, too. Unlike Twitter, you can simply link to a YouTube video and it will play in the feed.
- **Get personal.** While posting through your library’s page is powerful, library staff can also help amplify issue advocacy messages to their peers through personal posts. LinkedIn is often seen as a more professional network, so messages shared there can have a big impact.

Know the Rules

Before you start posting, make sure you know what content has been approved for social media. If your library is run by your county government, you will likely have guidelines or restrictions about what political speech can appear on your library’s pages.