

LibraryCrunch

Bringing You A "Library 2.0" Perspective, by Michael Casey

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Local Governments and Funding

For those public libraries that garner the majority of their funding from local or regional government bodies, getting attention, positive attention, has always been very important, especially when it comes to funding. Historically we have depended upon the taxpayers, our daily customers/patrons, to place a high value on our services and pass on this appreciation by electing library-friendly politicians.

But this linkage can be slow and is often tenuous. Happy library users do not always ask campaigning politicians where they stand on library funding issues. Sometimes the only time a taxpayer notices funding issues is when it's too late, and a branch has been closed or library staff has been laid off.

The library needs to be noticed and appreciated by those politicians, and we need to be recognized at a deeper level than simply being the institution that lends books and offers story times for kids (I'm not saying these aren't also vital services, so don't send me hate mail). So how can the library get noticed by sitting government officials?

One way would be to begin a formal program of providing information to the local government authority. By working with local government leaders, whether it's a board of commissioners or mayor or other body, the library could coordinate to provide detailed reports on the top two or three issues for an upcoming meeting. The library could also be "on call" to provide detailed information (issue background reports, perhaps) at the request of any senior government official. The point here is to make the library an important and formal resource in the eyes of local government officials and get them to remember that the library is a valuable resource for the community.

Since I've never started a program like this I'd be very interested to here if there are any libraries who are doing something similar, and if so, how successful they think it is.

Posted by Michael on January 11, 2006 06:45 AM | [Permalink](#)

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You might check the Newport News VA public library system, although they've gone to a virtual model now. But they have provided information to the local government for a long long time.

Posted by: Cathy | [January 11, 2006 10:58 AM](#)

See this article for some ideas about the gap that has to be overcome -
<http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2004/pdfs/smith.k.paper.pdf>

Posted by: Fiona | [January 12, 2006 03:28 PM](#)

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