

# PUBLIC LIBRARIAN’S GUIDE TO BEING VOCAL AND VISIBLE

Public libraries have always been trusted spaces for learning, connection, and discovery. Right now, it is especially important for public librarians to be vocal and visible about the work we do and the value we bring to our communities. This means being present, clear, and confident in sharing your library’s story.

## **What “Vocal and Visible” Means**

Being vocal and visible is about stewardship of a public resource. It looks like:

- ✓ Sharing what your library does and why it matters
- ✓ Showing up in your community
- ✓ Speaking clearly about library services and impact
- ✓ Building relationships before problems arise
- ✓ Making the library’s work easy to see and understand

## **Why It Matters Right Now**

Public libraries are experiencing:

- Increased public attention
- Questions about services and collections
- Budget pressures
- Rapid changes in technology and information use

When librarians stay quiet, others define the story.

When librarians share their work, communities understand the value.

Libraries thrive when people see:

- ✓ How the library helps children learn to read
- ✓ How job seekers find resources
- ✓ How seniors learn technology
- ✓ How families connect through programs
- ✓ How local history is preserved

Your voice protects your library.

## **Practical Ways to Be Vocal and Visible**

These ideas are simple, manageable, and effective.

### **1. Tell One Story Each Week**

Share a real example of impact:

- “A patron learned how to more effectively use email this week and applied for jobs.”
- “Our winter reading program reached 120 kids.”
- “We helped a small business owner research local history.”

Use:

- Library newsletter
- Social media
- Bulletin boards
- City reports

Stories are powerful and non-intimidating.

### **2. Be Present in the Community**

Choose one small step:

- Attend a city council meeting occasionally
- Visit a senior center or school program
- Set up a library table at a local event
- Speak briefly at a community group

You don't need a speech! Just share what's new at the library.

### **3. Make the Library's Work Visible Inside the Building**

Create displays that show impact:

- Program attendance numbers
- New library cards issued
- Photos of events
- Quotes from patrons

Example headline: *"This Month at Your Library: 850 Visits, 42 Programs, 19 New Volunteers."*

Numbers + stories = understanding.

### **4. Build Relationships Before You Need Them**

Connect with:

- City officials
- School leaders
- Local business owners
- Friends groups
- Community organizations

Invite them to:

- Library tours
- Small appreciation events
- Program visits

People support what they know.

### **5. Use Clear, Simple Language**

Avoid library jargon.

- Instead of: "Circulation increased by 12%," say: "More families are borrowing books than last year."
- Instead of: "We offer digital literacy services," say: "We help people learn computers, phones, and online forms."

## 6. Share Your Annual Story

Create a one-page report each year with:

- Programs offered
- Attendance
- Partnerships
- Community impact stories
- Photos

This can be shared with:

- City council
- Local newspapers
- Community bulletin boards
- Library website

### **Non-Intimidating Ways to Start**

If advocacy feels uncomfortable, try one of these first:

- ✓ Post one photo from a program
- ✓ Write a thank-you note to a partner
- ✓ Share one patron success story
- ✓ Invite a city official for coffee at the library
- ✓ Create a “Did You Know?” display

### **What to Say When Asked About the Library**

Keep a short, confident message ready:

**“Our library helps people learn, connect, and solve problems every day. We support students, families, job seekers, and lifelong learners. We are proud to serve our whole community.”**

Practice saying it aloud!

## **Remember**

- You are not promoting yourself.
- You are protecting access to information and opportunity.
- Public libraries are strongest when their communities understand their value.
- Your voice matters.
- Your visibility matters.
- Your library matters.

## **Reflection Questions**

What is one story from this week I could share?

Who is one community partner I could connect with?

What is one way we could make our impact more visible inside the library?

What is one message I want our community to remember about us?