

LIBRARY ADVOCACY  
AND STORYMAKING



# THE HERO'S JOURNEY FROM COMMUNITY TO PAGE (AND BEYOND)

2025 August  
Trustee Training Week, South Central Library System

Dawn Tevis, MLS, MLIS



# Dawn Tevis

## PRESENTER

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BA, journalism and public relations  
Master of Liberal Studies, literary nonfiction  
Master of Arts, library and information studies

Youth Services Coordinator,  
La Crosse County Library

ALA Sustainability Round Table,  
Public Awareness and Advocacy Committee

Writer, Editor

SEMAC Grant Recipient

Wisconsin Libraries Transforming Communities

Creative Community Leadership Institute

Book Arts Certificate, Minnesota Center for Book Arts

Presenter and Instructor: book arts, library advocacy,  
place-based librarianship, storytelling, sustainability and librarianship



# AGENDA

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## Library Advocacy and Storymaking

- Explore Story
- Craft Story
- Share Story
- Q&A



# Explore



# WHAT IS LIBRARY ADVOCACY?

LET'S CHAT!



# THE STORY OF COMMUNITY IN ACTION

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# COMMUNITY IN ACTION

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LIBRARY ADVOCACY IS COMMUNITY IN ACTION  
CONVEYED THROUGH STORY  
TO CREATE EDUCATED CHANGE

# LIBRARY ADVOCACY IS...

Co-Creative  
Empowering  
Strategic and Sustained  
Reactive and Proactive  
Transformative



# WHERE DOES LIBRARY ADVOCACY HAPPEN?

LET'S CHAT!



# LIBRARY ADVOCACY HAPPENS...

On the frontlines of service  
Through the media  
With legislators and stakeholders  
In community  
In municipalities  
At special events and programs



# HOW DOES LIBRARY ADVOCACY HAPPEN?



THROUGH ...





THE POWER AND PRACTICE OF STORY

# WIRED FOR STORY

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## Story Science and Art

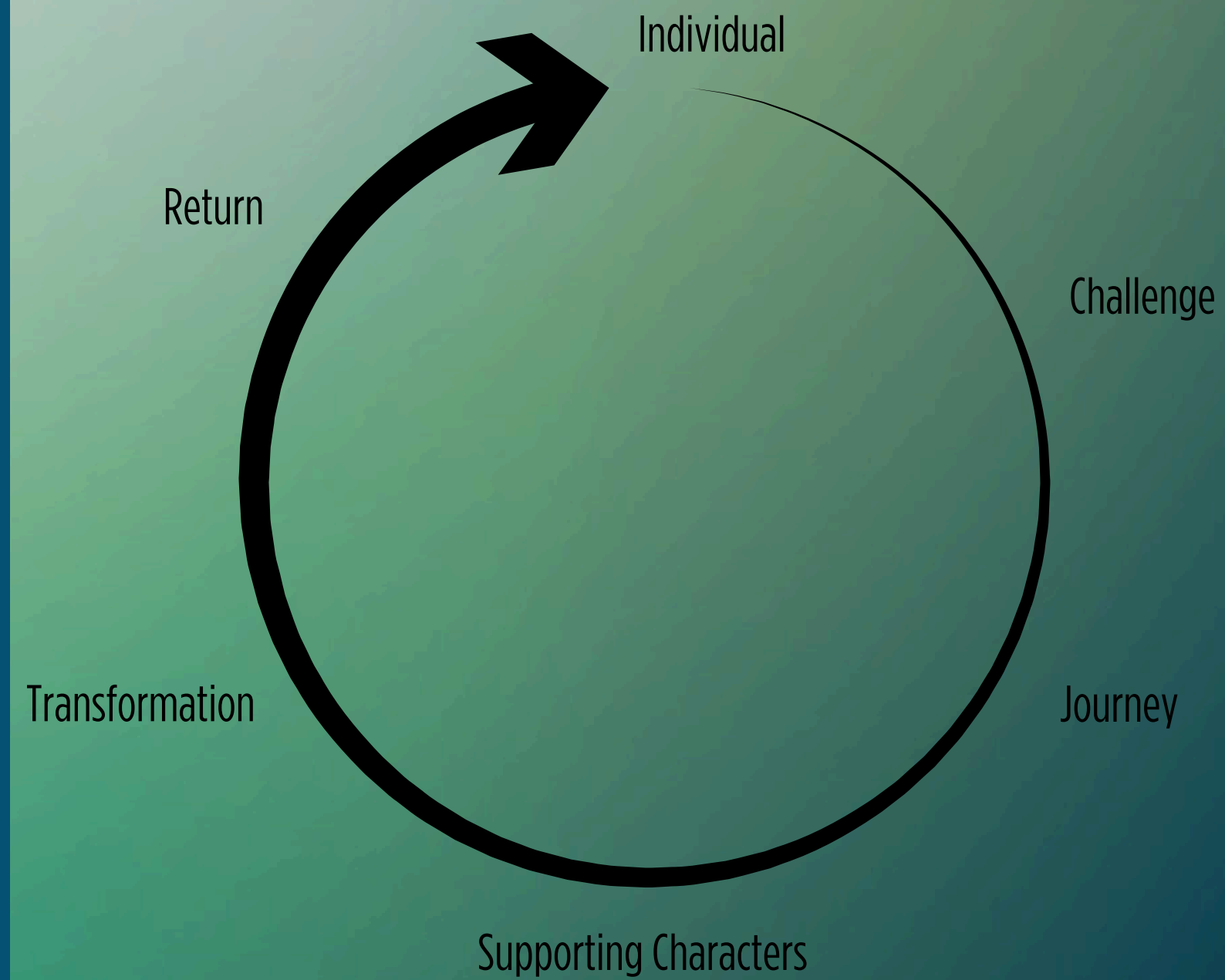
synaptic activity, synchronization

emotion, empathy, meaning





## The Hero's Journey






What makes a hero? - Matthew Winkler



# WHAT MAKES A HERO?



Watch on  YouTube



# LIBRARY ADVOCACY STORY: HERO'S JOURNEY DISTILLED

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Personal Entity

Community Challenge

Journey

Library Steps in As Helper

Transformation (and Information)

Call to Action or Catchphrase

THE LIBRARY  
IS NOT THE  
HERO OF THE  
STORY.

THE LIBRARY  
IS THE  
HELPER.

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# THE STORY OF COMMUNITY IN ACTION

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A place where  
community  
members can  
access the  
resources they  
need to create the  
community they  
want.





# APPLYING THE TEMPLATE

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Personal Entity

Community Challenge

Journey

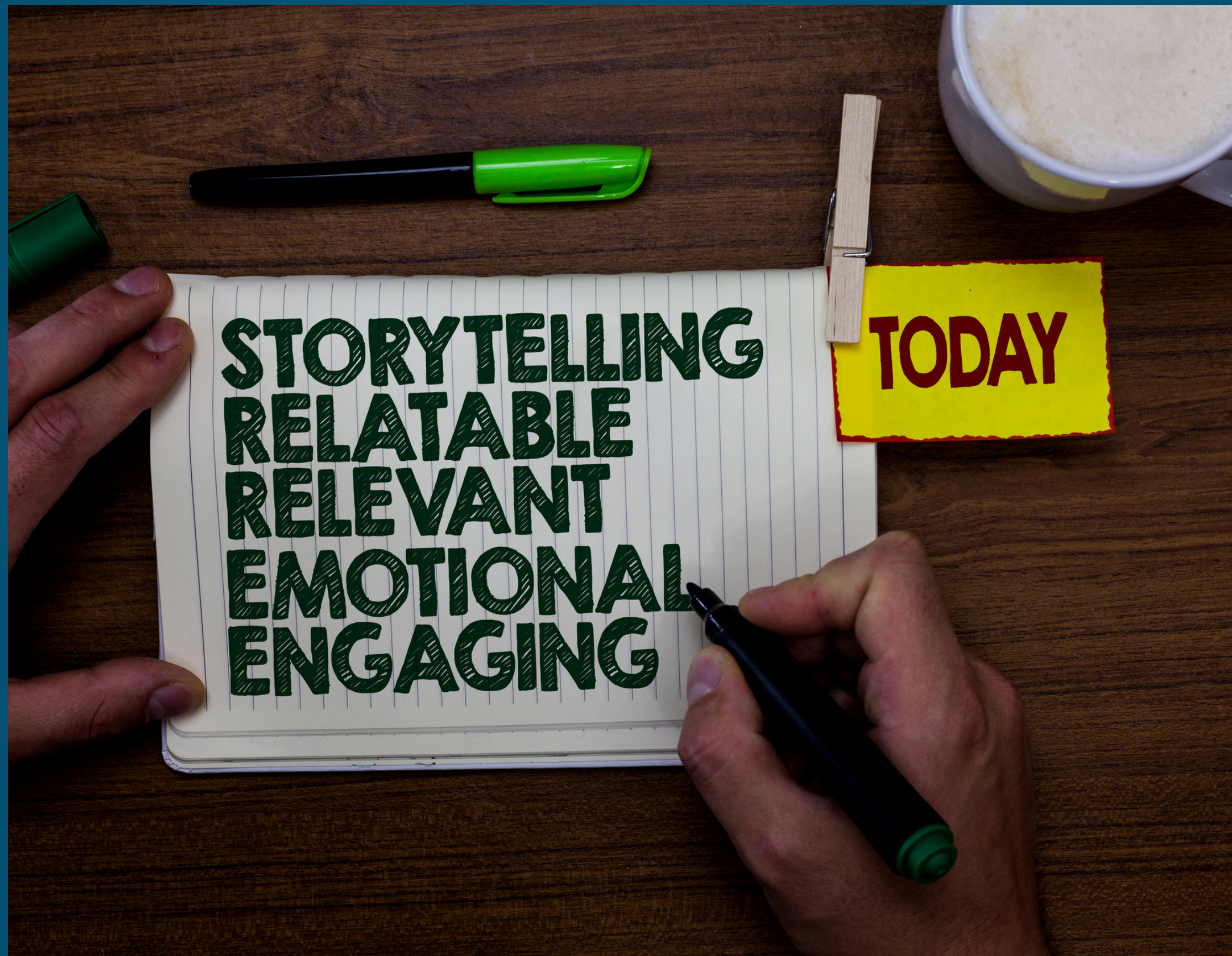
Library Steps in As Helper

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Call to Action or Catchphrase



EL COQUI'S KITCHEN  
HOMEMADE LATIN-INSPIRED BAKED GOODS



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# ELEMENTS OF POWERFUL LIBRARY STORIES

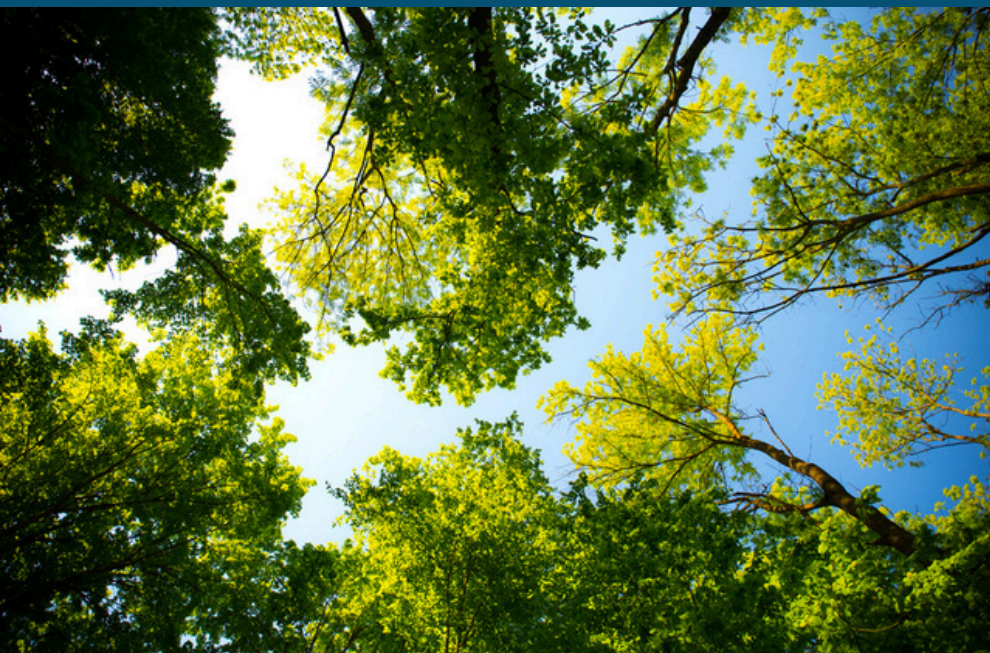


SUPERCHARGE  
YOUR STORY  
WITH THE  
POWER OF PLACE

# SPACE...

43°N, 91°W





...AND  
PLACE

# LIBRARY ADVOCACY AND CORE VALUES

Access  
Equity  
Intellectual Freedom  
and Privacy  
Public Good  
Sustainability





## What's Your Story?

B I U ↺ ↻

Please share what you'd like about your relationship with the La Crosse County Library in a short paragraph, or use any of the prompts below as inspiration.

- What keeps you coming back to the Library?
- How do you use the Library (e.g. resources, learning, programs)?
- How have you improved your life by using the Library?

Submit your form to possibly be included in our La Crosse County Library Community Makers newsletter. Please reach out to give and get more details, if needed. Contact us with questions.

What is your home library? \*

☐ Bangor



## What do you love about the library?

B I U ↺ ↻

February is Library Lovers Month, and we'd love to share what our patrons love about the library on social media. Please take a moment to let us know!

*Note: By completing this form, you are consenting to have your response shared on our Facebook and/or Instagram accounts. We will not publish your last name, just the first initial (e.g., "Jane D., Onalaska Library").*

Name \*

Short answer text

Email and/or Phone \*

Short answer text

# GATHERING POTENTIAL STORIES

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Staff  
Online forms  
Newsletters  
Volunteers  
Programs



# LA CROSSE COUNTY LIBRARY COMMUNITY MAKERS

CREATING COMMUNITY TOGETHER


*This month we're launching a new series of stories celebrating ways Driftless Region folks and their Library are connecting with place and creating home.*

## Connecting with Culture




*Daniel, Jennifer, and Emerson*

Jennifer Cabassa grew up absorbing the diverse soundscapes of bustling Manhattan and the rhythms of Spanish and English spoken as part of her Puerto Rican heritage in the one-bedroom apartment she shared with her parents and two siblings. Captivated by the beauty of the bluffs, the more relaxed pace of life, and greater affordability, she eventually chose to make a new home in the Driftless Region of Wisconsin with her husband, Daniel, and now three-year-old son, Emerson. But Cabassa struggled to find the cultural connections she hoped for. "Living out here, I felt like I was missing home," she shares.




LA CROSSE COUNTY LIBRARY  
**COMMUNITY  
MAKERS**  
CREATING COMMUNITY TOGETHER



**JENNIFER  
CABASSA**

"I try to take my son to as much as possible," she says of La Crosse County Library events and collections. They attend our Bilingual Story Times, offered in Spanish and English and featuring foods, dances, and stories for youth of all ages. "I absolutely love it!" she says. In creating a sense of home and connection with her Puerto Rican heritage through the Library, Jen also launched a Latin-inspired catering business!

FINDING COMMUNITY




LA CROSSE COUNTY LIBRARY  
**COMMUNITY  
MAKERS**  
CREATING COMMUNITY TOGETHER



**MEGAN P.**

When Megan and family moved within walking distance of our Onalaska location, she quickly determined to "make that a space for our kiddo to thrive," she shares. After attending a macramé workshop at our West Salem location, Macrame Mama WI, LLC was born, and Megan's library love grew full circle as she offered her own library classes. "I come from a family of creators and fiber artists," she says. A meditative outlet that helps her process her work in healthcare, Megan's community macramé work embodies her commitment to normalizing creativity for all ages, connecting with other small business owners and artists, and leaving the world better than she found it—through sustainable practices like reusing, recycling, and repurposing—"as a legacy and as a mama."



La Crosse  
County  
Library

► Campbell ► Holmen ► Onalaska ► West Salem


**MANY WORDS CAN YOU FIND?**

A	M	Y	S	T	E	R	Y	A	L
A	R	S	U	S	P	E	N	S	E
W	M	C	A	V	P	Y	A	G	D
D	I	P	L	A	T	U	A	H	M
E	U	N	B	I	M	M	U	O	E
O	O	A	N	E	I	T	F	L	L
C	E	U	V	N	L	R	I	M	A
E	M	A	G	T	J	L	C	E	S
M	B	A	N	G	O	R	T	N	T
N	A	L	A	S	K	A	I	E	S
E	D	U	C	A	T	I	O	N	E
I	B	R	A	R	Y	E	N	G	W

LIBRARY  
MYSTERY  
ONALASKA  
SUSPENSE  
TECHNOLOGY  
WESTSALEM

FICTION  
GAMING  
HOLMEN

SCAN TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE!

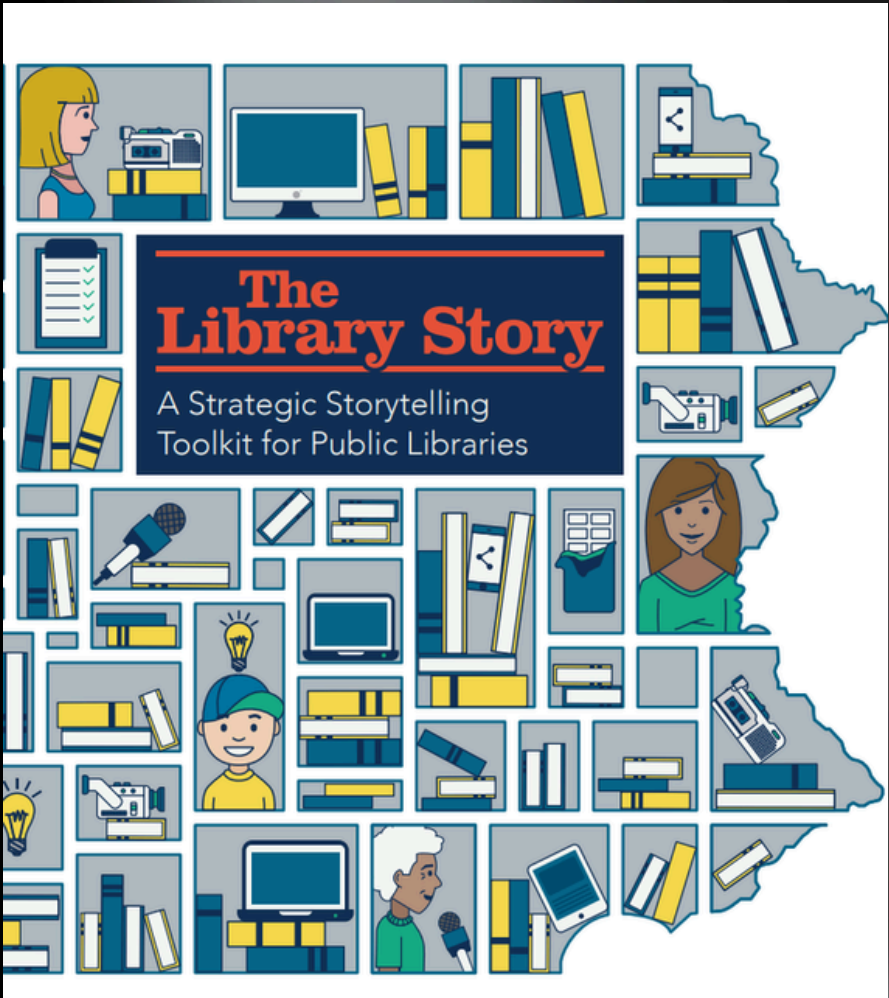


# BEST PRACTICES IN ADVOCACY STORYMAKING

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Privacy  
Permission  
Audience  
Review  
Formula as Guide  
Short, Longer Version

# Resource Spotlight



**52 Ways to Make a Difference – Public Library Advocacy throughout the Year**

Dr. Camila Alire, President, American Library Association  
Presidential Initiative Chairs, Patty Wong and Julie Todaro  
September, 2009

Now more than ever ALL public library employees must understand their essential role in advocating on behalf of libraries and should be able to deliver powerful messages stressing the value of libraries to gain community support for library endeavors. This critical role includes understanding the importance of advocacy; a commitment to disseminating the information through the art of persuasion and influence; and creating and delivering messages using a variety of communication strategies. As a result, employees – at all levels within the organization – should be able to motivate customers to build institutional “grassroots” support for library initiatives and the library budget; assist library administrators in representing library interests in decision making venues; and build a cohort of supporters who will advocate for libraries in their own environments throughout the organization – from the frontline to the highest administrative level.

Becoming educated about how to effectively and clearly communicate the value of libraries, including the essential role libraries play in creating and maintaining literate communities, should be a priority for all public library staff. This list of 52 ways to advocate - one idea per week for an entire year - is a roadmap to help staff get started in putting into practice their role as library advocates. The list offers a general theme for each week followed by more detailed and/or practical suggestions. As a result of making time each week to read and reflect on just one idea for advocacy, library staff will sharpen their skills in this vital area. They will build an army of supporters and advocates inside and outside of the library who can and will speak out on behalf of the Library.

**Do we think you can do one each week?** Weeeeelllll, maybe not; however, public libraries with multiple locations could divide up activities...libraries could pick their 12 favorite librarian could choose partners could split t libraries could pick t of advocating for

52 weeks of Your 52 themes!	6. Celebrate National Library Week (NLW) at your library.	Put up a display about “how libraries change lives” or adopt the NLW annual theme.	Review ALA’s annual National Library Week activities from past years and for the annual campaign.	Visit ALA’s NLW content. <a href="http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oio/natlbraryweek/nlw.cfm">http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oio/natlbraryweek/nlw.cfm</a> and visit <a href="http://www.livelibraries.org/nationallibraryweek/index.cfm">http://www.livelibraries.org/nationallibraryweek/index.cfm</a>
1. Create sustained and continuous, positive patron and library constituent involvement through frontline advocacy.	Use quotes from famous people on how libraries changed their lives.  Encourage patrons to share their own oral history and/or stories on how libraries changed their lives.	Take a self-paced “course in setting up oral history collections.” Focus on “setting up interviews.”	Over 75 quotes about libraries can be found at <a href="http://www.great-quotes.com/">http://www.great-quotes.com/</a> and the same site yields over 1400 quotes on books and over 800 on reading. Enjoy!	
7. Learn to tell the library story.	Have a clear, memorable message. You will need a simple, powerful message, one that is easy to say and remember—about 10 words. And you should use it consistently in publicity materials and presentations. The more you use it, the more likely people are to “get it” and act. Examples: “Our community deserves a 21st century library.” or “Kids need libraries as much as they need schools.”  Share the vision of the future of libraries and information whenever you have the opportunity.	Use best practices and assess for adaptation to your library (past annual activities) for “telling library stories.”	“How to” for oral history... <a href="http://www.oralhistory.unsw.edu.au/assist.htm">http://www.oralhistory.unsw.edu.au/assist.htm</a> and <a href="http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/audiovis/oral_history/setting_up.htm">http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/audiovis/oral_history/setting_up.htm</a>  Use OCLC’s inspirational pieces <a href="http://www.oclc.org/nextspace/001/advocacy.htm">http://www.oclc.org/nextspace/001/advocacy.htm</a>  Visit <a href="http://livelibraries.org">http://livelibraries.org</a> for more ways to get involved.  There are excellent answers to tough questions and other tips that have been developed by the New York Library Association’s Public Awareness Project. See “New Yorkers for Better Libraries.” <a href="http://www.nylibas-pac.net/">http://www.nylibas-pac.net/</a>	

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# Craft



Library Advocacy

## Storymaking Worksheet

Personal Entity

Community Challenge

Journey

Journey, cont. Library Steps in As Helper

Transformation (and Information)

Call to Action or Catchphrase

Where I  
Might Share

# CRAFTING YOUR LIBRARY ADVOCACY STORY

Describe an entity (e.g., person, land, organization) within your local community and a challenge they have confronted. How did or could your library serve as a change agent or step in as a supporting character?

# ADVOCACY STORY INSPIRATION: THE CAVE

- What challenges is your library facing?
- What projects are you working on?
- What strategic plan goals are you trying to meet?



# Check for Impact

- How does the protagonist drive the story forward?
- What emotions do you and/or your listeners feel in response to the story?
- What elements or characteristics of local place shape the narrative?
- What are some place details that could infuse the story with greater meaning and emotional impact?
- Whose voices (e.g., of the land, of Indigenous peoples, of artists, of community members) contribute, through inclusion or omission, to your place narrative? Are you demonstrating inclusivity and belonging?
- How might this story help your library more deeply engage or amplify those voices in an evolving understanding and story of place?
- How does the story further a professional core value?
- How does the information piece help deepen the emotional impact?
- What action will listeners want to take after hearing the story?

# Share





Personal Entity  
Community Challenge  
Journey  
Library Steps in As Helper  
Transformation (and Information)  
Call to Action or Catchphrase

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# Listen

What worked?

What would you like  
to hear more of?

How might this be shared  
within the library,  
community, and beyond?

# TAKEAWAYS

- Library advocacy is community in action conveyed through story to create educated change.
- We're wired for story.
- Story transforms.
- Advocacy (and story) is an ongoing and unfolding practice.



ADVOCACY  
IS COMMUNITY ...

... COMMUNITY  
IS STORY

WHAT'S  
YOURS?

[tevisdawn@gmail.com](mailto:tevisdawn@gmail.com)

[dtevis@lacrossecounty.org](mailto:dtevis@lacrossecounty.org)



# RESOURCES

[Creating Effective Stories to Share with Lawmakers](#)

[ALA Advocacy Action Plan Workbook](#)

[ALA Ecosystem Initiative](#)

[ALA State and Local Year Round Advocacy Checklist](#)

[ALA Getting Started with Advocacy](#)

[How To Tell a Library Story](#)

[Library Advocacy Trustee Training](#)

[PLA Advocacy Tools and Resources](#)

[WLA Preparing for Library Legislative Day](#)

[WebJunction Advocacy Webinars](#)

[The Library Story: A Strategic Storytelling Toolkit for Public Libraries](#)

[Digital Commons Library Storytelling Team Guidebook](#)

[Digital Commons "Reporting Library Advocacy Stories to Increase Funding:](#)

[Guidebook for Story Reporters.](#)



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