Today’s Presenters

John Chrastka
Executive Director,
EveryLibrary

Lee Hallberg
Executive Director,
Mancos Public Library, CO

James Ochsner
Director of Library Services
Sutter County Library, CA
Getting Unstuck about Library Funding
WebJunction - ARSL

John Chrastka | Lee Halberg | James Ochsner
@everylibrary | @mancoslibrary | @sutterCOlibrary
About EveryLibrary

- First Political Action Committee for Libraries
- Different than a Membership Organization or Non-Profit
- 83 Ballot Campaigns to date with 64 wins
- $265 million in stable tax funding wins annually
What does it mean **to be stuck** and **not ask** for the **funding** your library needs?
“Sources of Stuck”

In EveryLibrary’s experience:

External Opposition

Lack of Internal Engagement

Image: https://flic.kr/p/swVKXe by AgriLife Today / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0
External Factors

1. Elected officials or ‘the powerful’ are opposed
2. Zero-Sum and local watchdogs are at work in town
3. There is an organized or vocal “Any tax is a bad tax” group
4. Residents are against the staff or the board, personally
5. Focused censorship or materials challenges, nuisance FOIA
6. No money available without significant change
US Voter Attitudes

27% will Definitely vote yes for the library
31% will Probably vote yes
21% will Probably vote no
21% will Definitely vote no for the library

From Awareness to Funding, OCLC, ALA and PLA (2018)
What if the US Closed Libraries?

66% say the closing of their local public library would have a major impact on their community.

33% say closing the library would have a major impact on them personally, or on their family.

Libraries 2016, Pew Research Center
Internal Issues

1. Low level of financial literacy among leaders
2. Poor political literacy about advocacy and agency
3. Lack of trust among library staff for leadership / board
4. Friends or Foundation think they are ‘white knights’
5. Fear of failure leads to over-analysis inside but low outside engagement
6. “We lack capacity” is a euphemism for we lack of talent
What Gets Us Unstuck?

Two real-world stories about getting a library ‘unstuck’ and on the path to new funding....

Lee Halberg, Mancos Library in Colorado

James Ochsner, Sutter County Library in California
Questions and Comments in Chat, please....
Mancos, Colorado

Moving Toward an Election to Get Unstuck

Lee Halberg, Director
About Mancos, Colorado

• Small rural community in SW Colorado founded in late 1800’s
• Long tradition of farming / ranching / mining, conservatively minded folks
• Recent new influx of diverse, liberally minded transplants

Photo used with permission from Mancos Public Library
Mancos Fiscal Challenges

• Declining tax revenue on heels of new building

• Recent (successful) request for Mill increase from community to support new building
Why We Were Stuck

• Board hesitant to talk about challenges or to ask for increased funding from taxpayers
• Some community members critical of size & cost of new building
• Waiting for economic recovery...
Library & Community Strengths

• Users of library very pleased with services, collections & programs
• Excellent relationship with school administration & teachers
• Good rapport & partnerships with other local non-profits
• Responsive to community needs

Photo used with permission from Mancos Public Library
What Finally Motivated Us to Get Unstuck?

- New management willing to look at long-term needs & take action
- Completion of Strategic Plan highlighting financial sustainability as a goal
- Faith in community understanding of role of library for community health

Photo used with permission from Mancos Public Library
How We Got Unstuck

• Looked closely at our relationships and areas where library service was “vital”
  ▪ School District
  ▪ Chamber of Commerce
  ▪ Early Literacy

• Crafted positive message with emotional appeal, focused on community health & taking action
  ▪ “Your support means we can continue to provide these important services that are vital to the health of your schools, students, businesses, etc.”
  ▪ Equate the expense in “real life” dollars: “For less than the cost of one cup of coffee per month...”
How We Got Unstuck

● Ensured our Library Board was on board
  o Estimated 5 year budgets w/ 2 scenarios; if we pass, if we fail
  o Board members had to understand the importance of:
    ▪ Speaking the candid truth without excuses
    ▪ Their responsibility as Board members and the importance of action
How We Got Unstuck

• Election committee of *passionate* supporters who understand the importance of the library to the health of the community.
• Prepared for push-back (but didn’t invite it)
• Ensure all library stakeholders were educated and prepared to advocate at all times
• Prepared to fail, learn and try again!
What’s Different Now for Mancos

• Library seen as a vital part of community health and readily supported
• Deeper school / library ties and collaboration
• Library now more outward focused

Photos used with permission from Mancos Public Library
Thanks, Lee!

Questions and Comments in Chat, please....
Sutter County Library

Looking Outside to Motivate Inside the County

James Ochsner, Director
About Sutter County, California

• 100 miles NE of San Francisco and 35 miles north of Sacramento
• Only 2 incorporated cities in the whole county – Live Oak & Yuba City
• Agriculture drives the local economy
• The Library has 3 branches located in Yuba City, Live Oak and Sutter
About Sutter County, California

- Early settlers were from Mexico, Europe and Punjab India
- New arrivals are large numbers from Afghanistan and those priced out of the housing markets of Sacramento and the Bay Area
- Conservative with deep religious roots
Fiscal Challenges

- County General Fund Library
- Lost 45% of budget during recession - years playing catch up
- Tax Revenues took a big hit during the recession and remain flat
- Pressure to find offsetting revenue
- Took a voluntary cut from the Friends to safeguard their funds

Photo used with permission from Sutter County Library
Why We Were Stuck

• High turnover rate in county leadership (CAO, Budget Analysts, HR)
• Mixed messages on spending of fees
• History of disagreement between county and city
• Hesitancy of Board to discuss a tax increase
• No clear objectives
Our Library & Community Strengths

• High level of community support
• Strong Workforce Development
• Respected Literacy Program offering ELA and Citizenship
• Partnerships that expand the library’s reach
• A very supportive Friends group
What Finally Motivated Us to Get Unstuck?

• Looking beyond the county

• Aspen Institute’s *Rising to the Challenge*

• Aspen Institute’s *Action Guide for Re-Envisioning Libraries*

[www.libraryvision.org](http://www.libraryvision.org)
How We Got Unstuck

• Engaged the community through public dialogues
• Convened a Leadership Roundtable
• Leverage priorities that came out of the Roundtable
• Engage leaders and cultivate conversations that transcend local political disagreements
• Library staff examine practices for efficiency - which tasks give taxpayers and patrons a better ROI
What’s Different Now - Sutter County Library

• Library has a seat on the County Administrator’s Executive Team

• Leaders come to me to partner or offer support

• Using recommendations from our Aspen Roundtable as a planning document

Photo used with permission from Sutter County Library
What’s Different Now - Sutter County Library

• Established open communication with city governments to move projects forward
  o Remodeled Live Oak Branch
  o Meeting with County, City, Friends and Service Organizations to fund a redesign of the Main Library Branch
Thanks, James!

Questions and Comments in Chat, please....
Getting Unstuck is a combination of inner resolve and outside help.
What if the US Closed Libraries?

66% say the closing of their local public library would have a major impact on their community.

33% say closing the library would have a major impact on them personally, or on their family.

PEW 2016
How do you tap the well of empathy in your community for library funding?
Voter Attitudes

56% will Definitely or Probably vote yes for the library

42% will Probably or Definitely vote no for the library
use doesn’t matter
the data

POLITICAL PARTY DOESN’T MATTER
the data

demographics don’t either

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Voters Focus on Both Nouns

The factors that determine residents’ willingness to increase their taxes to support their local library are their *perceptions* and *attitudes* about *the library* and *the librarian*.
The Image of the Librarian...

They recognize the value of a ‘passionate librarian’ as a true advocate for lifelong learning.

From Awareness to Funding 2008 OCLC, p7-4
Four Kinds of Stories

- Personal/Organizational stories about successes that emphasize values.
- Personal/Organizational stories of failures that demonstrate integrity.
- Stories about other people who are important to you.
- Stories about what “why you do what you do.”
Shift Your Marketing From ‘Use’ to ‘Belief’

“If you focus your marketing and messaging to convince people to become users, you will alienate people who don’t want to be users but still value who you are and what you do.”
Thank You!

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Questions and Comments in Chat, please...