

# Today's Presenters



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Executive  
Director,  
EveryLibrary



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Mancos Public  
Library, CO



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Director of  
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Sutter County  
Library, CA



everylibrary  
Building Voter Support For Libraries

# 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



# 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.





# 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....



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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
  - Estimated 5 year budgets w/ 2 scenarios; if we pass, if we fail
  - Board members had to understand the importance of:
    - Speaking the candid truth without excuses
    - Their responsibility as Board members and the importance of action



Photo used with permission from Mancos Public Library

# 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



Photo used with permission from Sutter County Library

- 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



Photo used with permission from Sutter County Library

# 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



Photo used with permission from Sutter County Library

# 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*



Photo used with permission from Sutter County Library

[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
  - Remodeled Live Oak Branch
  - Meeting with County, City, Friends and Service Organizations to fund a redesign of the Main Library Branch



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Thanks, James!

Questions and Comments in Chat, please....





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*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**.

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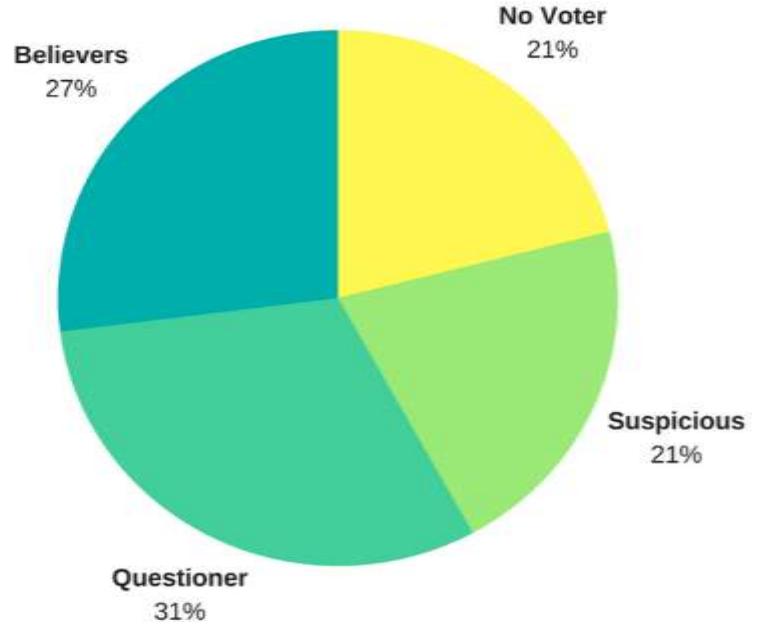
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*How do you tap the well of empathy in your community for library funding?*

# Voter Attitudes

56% will Definitely or Probably vote yes for the library

42% will Probably or Definitely vote no for the library



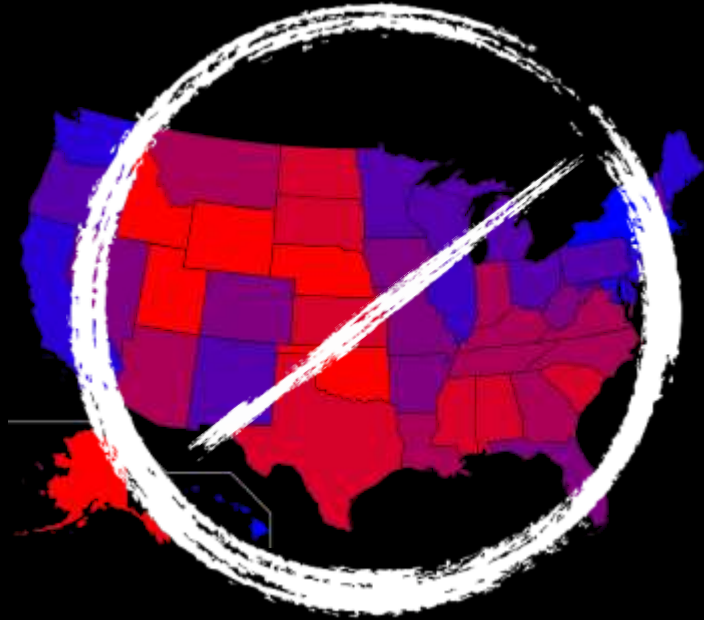


the data

use  
doesn't matter

the data

POLITICAL  
PARTY  
DOESN'T  
MATTER



the data

### Demographic Information

Age Range: 25-34	Age Range: 18-25
Gender: Female	Gender: Male
Number of Children: 2-3	Number of Children: 0
Marital Status: Married	Marital Status: Single
Homeowner/Renter: Homeowners	Homeowner/Renter: Renters
Household Income: \$80,000-\$120,000 (range)	Household Income: \$32,000-\$42,000 (range)



demographics don't either



# 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.

# 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.”



Photo courtesy Library Journal 2017

## 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...*



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