

Attending Legislative Day

Developing ongoing public support for academic, public and school libraries is crucial for sustaining and developing library services in South Dakota. A critical part of the support network for South Dakota's libraries is the South Dakota Legislature, as it can enact laws that either advance or hinder the efforts of libraries and librarians. Because legislators pay particular attention to the people who live in their districts, it is important for librarians to attend Legislative Day. In 2016, SDLA Legislative Day is January 20. An agenda for the day is available from the [SDLA website](#).

Each librarian has a role in developing relationships with the legislators who live in our individual districts in order to inform the legislators of the issues that affect libraries and influence their decisions positively on behalf of libraries. Please attend Legislative Day and contact your legislators in advance to let them know you are coming and would like to meet with him or her. It helps to do research beforehand to learn to recognize the legislator by sight, to know what committees he or she is on, and to know what bills he or she is sponsoring. You will find this information on the [Legislative Research Council's website](#).

In addition to legislators, SDLA also sends invitations to other South Dakota government officials, such as the Government, Department of Education Secretary, and the Board of Regents. In addition to influencing legislators, Legislative Day gives librarians an opportunity to talk to other decision makers about the importance of South Dakota's libraries.

If you are attending Legislative Day, please RSVP on the [SDLA website](#) or [here](#).

Developing Your Message

The theme of SDLA's 2016 Legislative Day is **Libraries Transform**. Taken from [ALA's Libraries Transform campaign](#), our goal is to communicate the message to South Dakota's legislators that libraries aren't obsolete, or "nice to have" but are essential. Our key messages are:

- Library professionals facilitate individual opportunity and community progress.
- Libraries are committed to advancing 21st century literacy skills and developing a digitally inclusive society.
- Libraries of all kinds add value in 5 key areas: education, employment, entrepreneurship, empowerment and engagement.

When planning what to say to your legislators, ALA recommends using real life stories that help support the key message. This is an example of a possible message:

"Hello, Representative Hawks, my name is Stephanie Bents, and I live in your district. Thank you for coming to our luncheon today. I want to talk about how essential our libraries are to helping the people in our community develop 21st century skills. You may have recently read the article in the *Argus Leader* about how the third grade reading test scores in Sioux Falls lag behind the rest of the state. This is concerning, because third grade reading scores are used as a predictor of success later in life. I work for Siouxland Libraries, and we recently implemented an early childhood literacy center to teach parents how to prepare their preschool age children for

kindergarten. We held classes once a week for five weeks, and experts in early childhood education worked with the parents on topics such as reading to your children and incorporating learning activities in children's play as well as nutrition and child development. The families who attended the workshop have been back to select and check out books to read to their children. We will continue to offer the workshops because preparing children for school helps them to succeed in school, and this is important not only for the children, but also for our community. Libraries are essential to education."

It is a good idea to bring with you a library newsletter or pictures of programs or table displays that you can show your representative to drive home the point that libraries are essential. If you are bringing a table display, please contact the Issues Committee Chair (sbents@siouxfalls.org) to arrange for a table. In the [Library Advocate's Handbook](#), ALA recommends sending your legislators emails or mailed copies of your library's newsletter. As you engage with the legislator, see if they have any questions or comments about your library or libraries in general. Review the talking points below to help answer possible questions. They can be used to help craft your message, too.

Talking Points

These talking points are a compilation from ALA and the South Dakota State Library's Digests. It is not necessary to know and use all the points; instead, choose from one or two of these and add a personal story of how the library is essential.

1. Why Support South Dakota's Libraries

Libraries provide an invaluable service to the communities they serve. While all libraries are unique, they all share a few core principles that guide their service. These core principles form the foundation that makes libraries a public good.

- Libraries provide equal access to information for people of all ages and backgrounds.
- Libraries promote lifelong learning and literacy.
- Libraries preserve our culture and history for future generations.

- Libraries bring people and ideas together. Think of the library as the living room of your community.
- Libraries are unique. Where else can you have access to nearly anything on CD, DVD, the Web or in print – as well as personal service and assistance in finding it?
- In a world where knowledge is power, libraries make everyone more powerful.
- Libraries don't just offer the hardware, but also offer the expertise of librarians in helping teach people how to use the Internet and find the information they need quickly. While Google can give you 50,000 responses to your inquiry, your librarian can help you find the one answer you need.
- Libraries are part of the American Dream. They offer free access to all. They bring opportunity to all.
- Libraries and librarians provide free and equal access to information for people of all ages and backgrounds – in schools, on college and university campuses and in communities large and small.

- Libraries are for everyone, everywhere.

2. Library Use

Despite decreasing budgets, libraries across American have seen an increase in usage.

- 58% of adults in the U.S. have public library cards.
- On a typical day in South Dakota's public libraries, more than 11,000 people visit, 19,000 items are circulated, and 1,000 reference questions are answered.
- In South Dakota's school libraries, each week more than 50,000 students visited their libraries. South Dakota students checked out 40 items each on average from their school libraries in 2013-2014.
- Americans visit libraries more than 1.3 billion times and check out more than 2.1 billion items each year. Users turn to their libraries for free books, to borrow DVDs, to learn new computer skills, to conduct job searches and more.
- A 2012 poll conducted for the American Library Association found that 94% of respondents agreed that public libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed because they provide free access to materials and resources.
- More than 92% of public libraries provide services for job seekers.
- Nearly all Americans (96 percent) – even if they are not regular library visitors – agree that libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed. They support our public education and lifelong learning.
- Reference librarians in the nation's public and academic libraries answer nearly 6.6 million questions weekly. Standing single file, the line of questioners would span from Ocean City, MD to Juneau, AK.

Quotable Facts about America's Libraries:

- There are more public libraries than McDonald's in the U.S.—a total of 16,766 including branches.
- Americans go to school, public and academic libraries more than three times more often than they go to the movies.
- Americans check out more than eight books a year, on the average. They spend \$35.81 a year for the public library—about the average cost of one hardcover book.
- Americans spend nearly three times as much on candy as they do on public libraries.

4. Libraries and Technology

Libraries provide an invaluable resource for job seekers, as many patrons rely on the library as their only means of accessing the internet.

- Almost 89% of public library outlets now offer wireless Internet access. According to the FCC, over 80 percent of Fortune 500 companies require that a job application be completed

online. Patrons turn to library computers and Internet access to find work, apply for jobs online, type resumes and cover letters and open email accounts.

- Nearly 73% of libraries are their communities' only source of free computer and Internet access. This number increases to 82% in rural areas.
- Libraries help bridge the divide between those who have access to information and those who do not. Families making less than \$15,000 annually are two to three times more likely to rely on library computers than those earning more than \$75,000.

Quotable Facts about America's Libraries:

- Academic libraries held approximately 158.7 million e-books and public libraries held more than 18.5 million in 2010.
- A 2011 Pew study found that about 24% of library card holders had read e-books in the past year. Of them, 57% preferred borrowing e-books and about 33% preferred purchasing them.
- The 2011-2012 ALA Libraries Connect Communities study reported that 76.3% of libraries reported offering e-books, an increase of 9% from 2010-2011.

7. Economic Value of Libraries

Libraries are among the most effective of all public services, serving more than 2/3 of the public with less than 2 percent of all tax dollars. A number of recent studies have shown that libraries are among the most effective types of public service, and that libraries routinely provide a positive return on investment.

- Investing in libraries is an investment in education and lifelong learning.
- Libraries are among the most effective of all public services, serving more than two-thirds of the public with less than 2 percent of all tax dollars.
- Public libraries are a bargain. Nationally, the average cost to the taxpayer for access to this wide range of public-library resources is \$31 a year, about the cost of one hardcover book.

Return on investment examples:

- In South Dakota, residents receive \$4.73 return on investment for every \$1 spent on library services.