

JEWISH LIBRARY ADVOCACY KIT



A Tool for Library Advocacy
from the Association of Jewish Libraries

www.jewishlibraries.org



How to Use the Materials in this Kit:

Jewish Libraries Matter : A position statement on the role of Judaic libraries, and a collection of supporting statistics.

Share this document with administrators, or use the information in your own reports, articles, or statements.

The Beating Heart of Jewish Education : An article reprinted from NewCAJE's *Jewish Educator*

For school libraries: share this article with school administrators, reprint in your own publications, etc.

How to Advocate for your Library : Sample Talking Points

When you advocate for your library, what should you say? Here are sample talking points. You can use the ideas we've offered, or use the format and change the message to suit your own needs. Use these ideas to help you give a presentation, write an article or report, etc.

Advocacy Resources : A list of links

There are many, many library advocacy resources available on the Internet, and these are a few that we recommend.

JEWISH LIBRARIES MATTER



A Position Statement
from the Association of Jewish Libraries

www.jewishlibraries.org



A Position Statement on the Role of the Judaic Libraries

Judaic libraries vary greatly. They may be large or small; geared toward children, general readers, or scholars; stand-alone, a department within a larger organization, or a collection within a larger library. However, all Judaic libraries offer patrons educational opportunities to learn about Jews, Jewish culture, the Jewish experience, and/or Israel.

Within our Internet Age, information may be endless, but quality filtering for authoritative resources is becoming increasingly difficult. Librarians of Judaica are trained to guide patrons in assessing and accessing quality materials through efficient evaluation strategies and effective technologies. As facilitators and promoters of Judaic learning, librarians in Judaic settings have the additional role of encouraging the traditional Jewish value of a love of learning in their patrons.

Judaic library collections may have a narrow focus (i.e. children's materials, Holocaust materials) or they may maintain diverse collections that represent wide viewpoints and areas of interest. For many Judaic libraries, the diversity of resources extends from print to digital and other formats, providing the individual patron flexibility in accessing quality materials in his or her preferred media format. All Judaic libraries encourage and assist the individual in pursuing his or her personal, scholastic, and professional curiosities.

The Yiddish word for synagogue is "shul," which translates into English as "school" and emphasizes the importance of study within Jewish life. As supporters of that culture of education, Judaic libraries are key players in the Jewish community. The "People of the Book" are People of the Library as well.

- **Everyone loves libraries.** According to the Pew Research Center study, Library Services in the Digital Age, people have extremely positive associations with libraries. **Eighty percent** of Americans say that borrowing books and consulting reference librarians are services that are very important to them. Because people love them, libraries make excellent entry points to educating the public about Jewish community life and religion.
- **Jews value education.** A study by the Jewish Federations of North America highlights the increasing importance of learning (and thus libraries) within Jewish culture: "A greater proportion of Jewish children attend **day schools** than ever before, and a greater proportion of Jewish college and graduate students take **Jewish studies courses** than ever before."
- **Jews use libraries.** A SEFLIN study of Jewish library use in South Florida (the sixth largest Jewish population center in the world) showed that **seventy percent** of the Jewish community used the library regularly, and **eighty-three percent** reported that the library was very important to them.
- **Jews support libraries.** The Association of Jewish Libraries (est. 1966) has nearly **one thousand members**, and offers professional development both online and via annual conferences for those who work with Judaic collections.

"Libraries and librarians do what they do so quietly and efficiently that it's easy to take them for granted. But we do so at our peril. If we don't safeguard them, we will wake up one day and realize that we've lost something very, very precious, essential to democracy, to literacy, to our quality of life. A world without libraries is unthinkable."

-- Erica Silverman, Jewish award-winning author of picture books for children

THE BEATING HEART OF JEWISH EDUCATION



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inaugural online *Jewish Educator*, Summer 2010/5770

www.newcaje.org



by Heidi Rabinowitz Estrin

If you are lucky, your institution has its own library. I don't mean a bookshelf in a corner, filled with random donated volumes. I mean a full-service circulating library, staffed by a librarian who supports your curriculum. That is my wish for you -- that you have access to a library like the one I am privileged to run at Congregation B'nai Israel in Boca Raton.

My journey to becoming a Jewish educator began in the public library. After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh with a Master's of Library Science, I threw myself enthusiastically into the role of Youth Services Librarian. I worked in an enormous regional library so new that it wasn't even open yet when they hired me (I helped stock the shelves) and in a tiny neighborhood library planning its centennial celebration (I got us an Andrew Carnegie re-enactor grant). But I found my real home when I became the school librarian in a Reform synagogue, serving the children of the preschool and supplemental religious school.

I'm not a classroom teacher, but boy, do I teach. I teach letter and pattern recognition, story structure, and all those other pre-reading skills so important in the preschool years. I teach the little ones and the big ones about Jewish concepts, traditions, and holidays, at whatever level they can handle. I introduce stories and songs that sneak learning into children's minds while they are having fun. Perhaps most importantly, I help the students enjoy their time at school, planting that very Jewish seed of Talmud Torah, love of learning.

There is a problem in the field of Jewish education that may not be visible to you, but, to me, it's a tremendous, glaring obstacle. That problem is a general lack of understanding about the important role that libraries, and, more importantly, librarians themselves can and should play in Jewish education.

What can a good librarian do for your school? By offering a great mix of story times, lessons, books, music, videos, and even online activities, your librarian will:

- Create excitement about learning among your students.
- Reinforce the curriculum being taught in the classroom.
- Go beyond the curriculum with extension activities and pleasure reading.

Study after study shows that schools with well-developed library programs average higher reading scores among their students. Common sense tells us that children who have fun reading will love reading; children who love reading will love learning; and children who love learning will become successful, well-rounded, upstanding members of the Jewish community.

My goal in Jewish education is the same as the goal of this essay: to help people remember why they love libraries (because after all, who doesn't love libraries?) and to get our communities excited about using and supporting their own libraries. To accomplish this goal, I've gone beyond the four walls of my own library, creating a podcast (*The Book of Life*) about Jewish reading and culture, blogging with our preschoolers during computer lab time, getting involved with the Association of Jewish Libraries and their Sydney Taylor Book Award for Jewish children's literature and also with the PJ Library program that offers free books to Jewish families.

All of these projects have the same message at their heart. Read, read, *mein kind*. Use your library. Rely on your librarian. For we are the People of the Book, and the library is the beating heart of our very Jewish love of learning.

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HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR LIBRARY



Sample Talking Points
from the Association of Jewish Libraries

www.jewishlibraries.org



Getting your message out:

1. Ask to attend key meetings (such as a school or synagogue board meeting) to make your pitch.
2. Write a letter or create an annual library report for your synagogue or school administrators, and include your pitch.
3. Start a campaign among library users to increase visibility and enlist them as advocates for your library.
4. Remember that many institutions take their library facilities for granted. Don't wait until there is a threat of budget cuts or closure. Advocate preemptively!

**Use this sample format with your own message, or adapt the ideas we've offered.
Include a key message, benefits/problem/solution, stats and stories, and a call to action!**

Key Message: Your library is critical to your Jewish community's success.

1. BENEFITS: The library is a great resource and a great value for our community. Here are some of the benefits of our Jewish library:

- We offer a full range of in-depth Judaic materials (list examples here: classic texts; scholarly material; pleasure reading; religious guidebooks; Jewish children's books, materials offering spiritual inspiration, etc.
- We provide knowledgeable staff who are familiar with our patrons and can provide assistance tailored to their needs.
- We help families pass the joy of Judaism on to their children through literature and programming that creates warm family memories.
- We save time and money by helping people obtain materials they need to connect with Judaism intellectually, spiritually, and in hands-on practice.

2. PROBLEM: Our library is a hidden treasure that needs to be publicized more widely.

- Many people do not realize the benefits we offer.
- The modern world has an incorrect perception that the Internet can provide for all their informational and reading needs.
- Our librarians are humble and don't like to brag about their successes.

3. SOLUTION: We have a plan to increase awareness of the library:

- We will network with other departments within our organization and with other Jewish/literary organizations to spread the word about the library.
- We will provide information to influential people in our community and ask them to advocate for the library.
- We will use online tools such as the institution's website, e-mail, Facebook, etc. to spread the word about our library

to the wider community.

Offer statistics such as those provided on AJL's Jewish Libraries Matter document, or stats relating to your own library.

Provide anecdotes and examples from your community about library successes.

End with a Call to Action! For example if your goal is to engage others in advocating for the library, you might say:

Call to Action

"We need your support to raise awareness of the library."

- We ask that you share our message with (*name specific positions, groups, individuals*).
- We ask that you include library information in (*your print and online communications, your speeches, your presentations about our community, etc.*)
- We ask that you make time to visit the library, meet our staff, and offer your own feedback about how the library can best serve our community.

ADVOCACY RESOURCES



Additional Resource Recommendations
from the Association of Jewish Libraries

www.jewishlibraries.org



Workshop materials from Valuing Libraries: Demonstrating the Contributions Libraries Make to Their Communities
<http://home.earthlink.net/~stephaniegerding/>

American Library Association Advocacy & Legislation
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/>

The Library Advocate's Handbook
<http://www.ala.org/offices/ola/libraryadvocateshandbook>

School Library Advocacy Kit from International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)
<http://www.ifla.org/publications/school-library-advocacy-kit>

Survive and Thrive! An Advocacy Toolkit for School Librarians
<https://sites.google.com/site/caslsurvive/>

Infographic about school libraries
<http://www.lrs.org/news/2013/02/27/make-the-case-for-school-libraries-with-our-new-impact-studies-infographic/>

Value Calculator to estimate monetary worth of your collection and services
<http://www.ilovelibraries.org/getinformed/getinvolved/calculator>

Libraries are Essential: source for advice and consulting on library marketing, promotion, and public relations
<http://www.librariesareessential.com/>

Library Marketing Toolkits from ProQuest, for academic, corporate, public, school, and military libraries
<http://www.proquest.com/en-US/utilities/toolkits/default.shtml>

658.8: Practical Marketing for Public Libraries
<http://658point8.com/>

The Outreach Librarian: Because Outreach is Everyone's Job
<http://theoutreachlibrarian.com/>

ALA Washington Office's Tumblr—Library advocacy odds and ends from around the web
<http://libraryadvocates.tumblr.com/>