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Day in the District

Organizing your Library Day for your legislative, county, and city representatives

Due to the continued concern with Covid 19, the Mississippi Library Commission is offering you this guideline on creating a Day in the District event for your library since attendance at Capitol events have been curtailed. Day in the District (DITD) events are based on our past MLC Capitol Day events which many of you have participated in. A DITD event is designed to promote and raise awareness, with your elected officials, of the value that libraries provide to their local communities. It is important to note many of our elected officials are fond of libraries but only a small percentage are aware of what public libraries actually do- other than check out books.

It is our hope that providing a DITD event will bolster relationships with elected officials and effectively engage them with library activities and services. This event should be a friendly gathering that also includes many of your key supporters, like friend groups, commissioners/ board members, prominent patrons, etc. Plan to highlight some of the wonderful programs and/or services being offered in your library.

**The choice is yours if you want to have a DITD or not.** MLC is here to support you. Please keep us posted if you do decide to host a DITD event so that we can participate and help you promote your event. If you do decide to hold a DITD, plan for it to occur when the Legislature is NOT in session.

# Benefits

* Showcase the ongoing activities of libraries in the form of storytelling and activities
* Engage more participants including citizen/patrons
* Connect with your legislator on their home turf – and Yours!
* Great photo opportunity for everyone

Invite legislators and local officials for an official tour of your library and ask them to participate in activities that are scheduled for that day. Offer to walk them through many of the new online services available through their local library.

Don’t be discouraged if they decline. Consider inviting them to another event in the future. Consider how to keep them up to date on library news and mailing lists.

# Other Key points:

Think of this as a showcase of resources and services demonstrated directly to your state legislator and local elected officials on how the library is improving quality of life in your area.

Keep the tone friendly, fun, and positive.

If asked for specific information that is not immediately available, offer to provide as soon as possible after the event.

Hashtags: #DayInTheDistrict #MSlibraries #MississippiLibraries #MSDITD

Locate your Legislator here: <http://www.legislature.ms.gov/legislators/>

# 10 Step Guide to Advocacy (from MLC.lib.ms.us/Advocacy)

1. Be informed. Get information on the issues. Be sure to read MLC’s On the Same Page e-newsletter to stay informed about things going on.

2. Find out who your elected officials are at the local, county, and state levels. If you don’t know who your state legislators are you can use this website to make that determination or ask MLC for help: http://www.legislature.ms.gov. Be sure to include all senators and representatives from your district.

3. Put elected officials on your mailing lists and ask to be put on theirs. Mutual awareness of what each other care about is essential to building a strong relationship.

4. Share your success stories. Ask elected officials to distribute materials about your programs and activities at their office. Most of the elected officials will have a place in their offices for information about the districts they represent. Allow these people to be active in helping to promote your library.

5. Email a photograph to your elected officials if they attend one of your programs. Visual reminders help reinforce their awareness of your library – especially if the picture is of them at one of your events.

6. Say thank you – a lot! If you don’t have time to write, make a call. Never let the elected official forget you are out there. A handwritten note goes a long way.

7. Create visibility for your elected officials. Explore creative options for them to get positive exposure in their district through your library. Provide them with opportunities at your public events. Invite them to talk to your board, staff and patrons about the importance of your library to the community. This will encourage their staff to research your organization and get to know you better.

8. Act regularly and promptly. Don’t wait for someone else to take care of the issues. Make a commitment to do what you are able to do, no matter how small it may seem. Start believing that a single voice can make a difference.

9. Activate advocacy. Find others to join you in delivering your message. A business owner makes a meaningful case about the importance of your library to the community. A patron brings additional credibility to your case for the importance of your library. Make advocacy part of everyone’s job description (board, staff, and volunteers), because they all have a role to play in it.

10. Don’t be afraid to ask them for support! They work for YOU!

# Planning Guide

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Planning**  **DATE** |  | **Notes** |
|  | Create timeline for events, mailings, announcements, and activities during the event |  |
|  | Plan staff meetings to plan day of activities |
|  | Order / request any necessary supplies – promotional supplies, consider creating a poster of your Snapshot Day statistics and other important information |
|  | Assign activities to staff. Keep activities simple. What would make the best photo op? |
|  | Invite your FOL group and other library supporters to participate. It is more effective to have outside people advocate for your library. |
|  | Send out invitations 4-6 weeks in advance |
|  | Send email/invitation to any other individual or group you would like to invite to the event |
|  | Create social media events |
|  | Send announcements to local media outlets as well as place the information on community calendars. |
|  | Create library signage for your library (need help? Reach out to PR@mlc.lib.ms.us) |
|  | Create name tents or other signage for areas in your library |
|  | Develop your talking points, what message do you want to convey, what story do you want to tell? |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Day of** |  |  |
|  | Set up stations |  |
|  | Pick up refreshments (if any) |
|  | Have photographer/videographer ready, Selfie Stations, other photo ops, etc. |
|  | Name tags |  |
|  |  |  |
| **After event** |  |  |
|  | Clean up |
|  | Thank you notes with 10 business days of event. |

## Ideas (What is most important about your library you want to share?):

Be prepared to answer these questions:

* Why what you do matters.
* How your services are unique.
* How the community is enriched by your services.

**Education**

Autism Resources

STEM Learning through Teen Sci Café to direct teens toward careers in science

Windows, Internet, and Email training for seniors

Early childhood Development  
Teens – summer reading programs, Test Prep  
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

**Economic Development**

Assistance to adults for college degrees and job searches

Workforce Development

Business Partnership

After-school computing club for girls (teens and pre-teens to prepare for job searches)

Government information – local, state, national  
Reference services  
Referral services to other agencies  
Incubator space for start-ups  
Business resources  
Entrepreneurial support  
Practice test resources  
Online access for job search – including email address set up  
Resume assistance and support materials  
Interviewing support materials

**Quality of Life**

Adult Hobby-Type classes (soap-making, beekeeping, sewing, photography, etc)

Pop up library in nursing homes

Hoopla service for patrons

Senior Computer Class and other senior services

Bookmobile services

# Resource Links:

<https://www.prudentpennypincher.com/150-free-things-public-libraries-offer/>

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/alivelez/things-you-can-do-with-a-library-card>

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ariannarebolini/library-resources-services-will-change-your-life>

<https://bookriot.com/what-do-libraries-do/>

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/public-awareness/pr-tools>

<https://www.ala.org/yalsa/workingwithyalsa/committees/districtdays>

<https://www.ala.org/united/powerguide> See Below

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/tools>

<https://youtu.be/PP9v2eUFxgY> Library Marketing Show “Three Helpful Ideas for Promoting Community Events at Your Library in a Time of COVID”

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2016.1200362> Persuasive Advocacy. Public Library Quarterly (New York, N.Y.), 35(2), 126–135. Haycock, & Matthews, J. R. (2016).

Talking Points and Quotes from ALA PowerGuide:

The hyperlinks below are available with a single click from <www.ala.org/united/powerguide.>

* Studies show categorically that children who are read to prior to kindergarten enter school  
  ready to learn far more than children who don’t have a book rich environment. Our library is  
  the only organization in town **[city, county, region]** that offers thousands of books for  
  preschoolers, story times, and resources for parents that will help them help their children  
  succeed and that is free and open to any member of our community.

*Our library is a real bargain compared to the cost of failure to succeed in school.*

* In low-income neighborhoods, children start kindergarten 60% behind their peers from  
  affluent communities, leaving them woefully unprepared. (Jump Start, “Early Childhood  
  Education Crises” at <http://www.jstart.org/our-work/americas-early-education-crisis)>  
  Our library helps bridge the gap between affluent and low income children’s achievement  
  every single day.
* Studies show that students who do not read during the summer need an average of a full  
  month remediation when school starts in September. (“What to Look for in a Summer  
  Reading Program.” Great Schools at  
  <http://docs.gatesfoundation.org/learning/documents/opportunityforall.pdf>)

*Our library has a rich, wonderful, and fun collection of reading materials for all ages and we  
proudly host a summer reading program every year that is enjoyed by over \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of our  
students*.

*Our library is a real bargain compared to a full month of educational remediation for  
every student in September – because even if only a few students per class need  
remediation – they all get it.*

* After school ends each day, our library becomes one of the busiest places in town! Not only  
  are our students off the streets and in a productive and safe environment, but they are also engaging with adults and resources that help them with homework assignments and provide them with a place for intellectual discovery.

*Our library is a critical component of the educational network ensuring student success in  
our city.*

* Few community services enjoy the type of public support that is generally given to public  
  libraries. In a recent national survey conducted by Public Agenda, people were more likely to  
  rate library service as excellent or good than the service they receive from their local police27
* department, public schools or their local media (“Making Cities Stronger: Public Library  
  Contributions to Local Economic Development,” Urban Libraries Council report  
  <http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/1001075_stronger_cities.pdf>).

*Our library is one of the most popular public services in town.*

* The digital divide may have become narrower, but it has become much deeper for those left  
  behind as commercial, medical, legal, and government information is increasingly available  
  online only.

*Our library provides an essential link for those without internet access and the need to  
connect through our free computer labs and free Wi-Fi access*.

* Everyday job seekers come into our library to use our computers and internet access. Today  
  most jobs are only posted online and only receive online applications.

*Our library is turning unemployed citizens into tax- paying citizens every day!*

* Libraries play an essential, non-partisan role in providing the information that allows  
  citizens to make informed decisions. Libraries make a difference. Libraries transform lives.  
  – Stephen Abrams in The Value of Libraries: Impact, Normative Data, & Influencing  
  Funders.
* “From providing a place to do homework to applying to college or looking for financial  
  aid, library online services are a key part of the educational system in our country.” From  
  Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Public  
  Libraries. Institute of Museum and Library Services
* A study from the Institute of Education (IOE) states that, “Perhaps surprisingly, reading for  
  pleasure was found to be more important for children’s cognitive development between ages  
  10 and 16 than their parents’ level of education. The combined effect on children’s progress  
  of reading books often, going to the library regularly and reading newspapers at 16 was four  
  times greater than the advantage children gained from having a parent with a degree.”

*Libraries are the very best resources for supporting pleasure reading and thereby helping  
to ensure academic success.*

# Sample Agendas

These are suggestions adapted from the Florida Library Association DITD guidelines.

**FACILITY TOUR SAMPLE PLAN** - 1.5 hour visit

10:00am - 10:15am Elected Official/Staff at front office

10:15am – 10:45am Library tour (including stacks, reading, computer, conference rooms, etc. Consider

some behind-the-scenes spaces as well, such as circulation workroom)

10:45am – 11:15am Meeting in conference room with employees, informal remarks and

Q&A/snacks

11:15am – 11:30am Wrap-up / final questions and comments from elected official

**BOARD / FOTL MEETING SAMPLE PLAN** - 1.5 hour visit

10:00am - 10:15am Greet Elected Official/Staff at front office

10:15am – 11:15am Meeting in conference room with trustees and/or local friends groups. Develop an

agenda that allows them to highlight the value of library in the community.

11:15am – 11:30am Wrap-up / final questions and comments

**PROGRAM SAMPLE PLAN** - 1.5 hour visit

10:00am – 10:15am Greet Elected Official/Staff at front office

10:15am – 10:45am Allow Elected Official/Staff to join a scheduled program such as reading to the

blind, a summer reading program or a personal development, training or health program being held at

your library.

10:45am – 11:00am Q&A from program participants

11:00am – 11:30am Brief tour of remaining library facilities and discussion with library staff

## Sample letter to an elected official

**<Insert Address >**

**<Insert date>**

Dear **<insert elected officials Title and Name>**

I am the Library Director at **<Insert name>** and one of your constituents. My staff and I would like to invite you to visit our library this **<spring/summer, etc.> on <DATE, TIME>.**

In an average year our library **<insert an interesting data fact about your library>.** We provide year-round learning opportunities for the community’s youth, including college and career preparedness, early childhood development reading activities, and contribute to the local community by providing access to the internet, reading materials in various formats (i.e., eBooks, audiobooks), and many more services to support our patrons and their families.

I can assure you that your visit to **<library>** will be enjoyable. We are planning **<insert description of activity for the visit – describe the activity they will be participating in>**. If you have no objection, we would like to take photos of your visit for our social media channels, our newsletter and invite our local news outlets to be present.

You are welcome to bring staff along with you and we would be happy to work with your staff to make specific arrangements. Please contact me if you have questions or needs. My direct phone number and email is listed below. You can also learn more about our library on our website at**<insert full URL>** and on **<insert favorite social media channel>.** I have also included some information about **<library name>** for you to review.

I look forward to hearing from you soon and thank you for all you do to ensure that members of our community, of all ages, have access to library services and resources.

Sincerely,

**<insert your full name & title>**

Enc**. <consider adding in material about your library, brochures, fact sheet, snapshot day numbers, etc>**