Mideastern Michigan Library Cooperative

Advocacy Plan

Adopted: December 14, 2006
Revised: 2010; 2012; 2015; 2019, 2022
Revised: September 10, 2026

Introduction

Mideastern Michigan Library Cooperative is organized under 1977 PA 89 and is one of eleven Cooperative libraries in the state. The Cooperative area includes sixteen public library systems in seven counties. Included in the area are Bay, Genesee, Lapeer, and parts of Clare, Isabella, Midland and Shiawassee counties. In addition to the public libraries, the Cooperative membership includes academic libraries and special libraries. School libraries are also eligible to join. The Cooperative provides services to its members that include continuing education for employees, workshops, and technology upgrade programs.

Additionally, the Cooperative provides professional consultation services and group discounts for purchase of library materials and equipment. The Cooperative has a role as an advocate for its member libraries within the Cooperative and on local, state and federal governmental matters that pertain to libraries and their services. The Cooperative has the responsibility of keeping its membership informed about the status of current legislative issues.

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to have a directed approach to advocacy that will help government leaders at all levels understand the pivotal role that libraries and library cooperatives play in building healthy and vital communities, as well as to assist all library personnel and supporters with a way to effectively communicate with leaders in government. Due to the multi-type nature of member libraries, the Cooperative staff will seek to be informed and to assist all member libraries in gaining improved awareness/understanding of all library-related local, state and federal government issues. Advocacy is an ongoing process that occurs on a daily basis and is a part of the library and cooperative mission and goals.

Importance of Advocacy

Library advocacy is vital in today's society for a variety of reasons:

a. All libraries are an integral part of community life; whether they are public, academic, special or school libraries.
b. Information literacy and the need for lifelong learning are increasingly important for each individual in a community.
c. The taxable property values in each local jurisdiction, which result in reduced tax revenues, are decreasing at the same time that libraries are facing increasing costs.
d. Libraries must be competitive with other entities to meet increased community needs with shrinking and/or limited funding.
e. Challenges to valued library institutions make the need for advocacy a necessary regular activity.
f. Libraries can be overlooked in the shuffle of democracy's many voices, taken for granted, be undervalued, or be trivialized.

Advocates Include

Cooperative staff: The Cooperative staff have the responsibility of being a gateway for disseminating information about legislation and other governmental actions to the membership; also, to promote interaction between the membership and the legislators. As an organizational member of the Michigan Library Association, the Cooperative receives legislative updates and is responsible for providing information to co-op members. Another role of the Cooperative is to help facilitate opportunities for library staff, Trustees and Friends to meet and talk with legislators.

Cooperative Board: The Cooperative Board has the responsibility to advocate for libraries at every opportunity. As representatives of all types of libraries, the Board is uniquely positioned to communicate the needs and challenges of cooperatives and libraries to the constituencies that have influence over library funding, both public and legislative bodies.

Member Libraries: The administration and staff at the member libraries are the first line of offense in an advocacy plan. Every staff member plays a significant role in getting the word out to those they come in contact with within the library and in their personal lives. Communicating the issues that are important to library advocacy and seeking to achieve an understanding of their impact is a major objective of the plan.

Library Trustees/Friends/Local Advocates: As volunteers in public service, they can speak up as representatives of the public. By their willingness to serve, Trustees demonstrate their strong belief in the value of a library as an institution dedicated to the pursuit of uncensored intellectual freedom, as a source of information and lifelong learning.

Advocacy Tools/Resources

- **American Library Association (ALA), Washington D.C.**
  The MMLC website will link to the Advocacy resources on the ALA website. Among the topics are information on the value of libraries, getting started, budgeting, challenges, building coalitions, and public relations. http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advocacy-university
  Additional links included on the website are:
  - Campaign for America's Libraries
    https://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=librariesandyou&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=53854
  - "Library Advocate's Handbook"
    http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advocacy-university/library-advocates-handbook
  - "Quotable Facts About America's Libraries"
    http://www.ala.org/offices/ola/quotablefacts/quotablefacts
  - Legislative Action Center
    http://cqrcengage.com/ala/
- **Michigan Library Association (MLA)**
  The MMLC website will link to the Advocacy pages on the MLA.
  https://www.milibraries.org/advocacy-efforts Included on the MLA site are:
  - Advocacy Resources
  - Contact Your Legislator
- **Public Library Association (PLA)**
  The MMLC website will link to the Advocacy pages of the PLA website.
  https://www.ala.org/pla/issues

- **The Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL)**
  The MMLC website will link to the Advocacy pages of the ARSL website.
  https://www.arsl.org/arsl-advocacy-center

- **United for Libraries (UFL)**
  The MMLC website will link to the advocacy resources on the UFL website
  http://www.ala.org/united/advocacy

- **Friends of Michigan Libraries (FOML)**
  This group is a good resource for information and training on library issues.

http://www.foml.org/

Training: MMLC will facilitate advocacy training opportunities that will focus on assisting libraries in finding background information and data that will help them talk to library supporters and legislators.

Events: The Cooperative staff is available to assist members in planning advocacy activities.

Legislative Activities: Support of and participation in state and federal legislative activities is an important part of the Cooperative service to its members. These efforts should be in cooperation with the **ALA and** MLA, and supportive of all libraries throughout the state of Michigan.

Public Relations:

- **Communicating Important Messages:** The MMLC Director will send out the latest MLA and ALA information regarding pending legislation and calls to action.
- **Media Contacts:** ALA provides the latest information on media contacts through the Campaign for America's Libraries. https://www.ala.org/ala/pio/campaign/campaignamericas.htm

Conclusion

The success of an advocacy program depends on the involvement and commitment of everyone in the Cooperative. Librarians and Trustees must cultivate relationships with local legislators and library supporters; they should be fully informed on the issues and ready to tell their library stories when the opportunity becomes available and when called upon. The Cooperative must be sure that information is flowing in both directions and should act as a facilitator in this process. The expected outcome is the recognition of the pivotal role that libraries and library cooperatives play in their communities in order to heighten the awareness of the issues facing libraries today.