

PUBLIC RELATIONS – APPENDIX G

Does your public understand and support your library? Public relations provides a planned program of policies and procedures that build public confidence and increase public understanding of the library services and resources. The goal of the public relations process is to ensure that all residents in the service area understand the library's role and services.

A. PLANNING & POLICIES

A library's public relations policy contains references to:

1. Attitude toward media, other governmental units, users, and non-users;
2. Public relations authority and responsibility, especially who is media spokesperson;
3. Distribution of print and non/print public relations materials;
4. Handling of complaints, suggestions for improvement, and compliments;
5. Use of publicity choices listed below, their scope and emphasis;
6. Participation of staff and trustees in promoting positive public relations.

Resources & Examples:

- Creating Your Library Brand: Communicating Your Relevance and Value to Your Patrons by Elisabeth Doucett. Chicago: ALA, 2008.
- The Library Crisis Communications Planner: A PR Guide for Handling Every Emergency by Jan Thenell. Chicago: ALA, 2004
- [Florida State University Libraries: Public Relations and Media Inquiries Policy](#)
- [Saginaw Public Library](#)
- [UPROC: Sample Public Relations Policy](#)

Advocacy:

- [Michigan Library Association: Advocacy Resources](#)
- [American Library Association: Tools for Advocacy](#)
- [OCLC: Advocacy](#)

Michigan Senate:

- [Senator Look Up](#)

Michigan House of Representatives

- [Representative Look Up](#)
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B. METHODS

Means of communicating with the public include:

- Newsletter
 - General Information brochure
 - [Newspaper article or column](#)
 - Annual report
 - Posters, flyers, bookmarks
 - Presentations to community groups, businesses, and institutions
 - Exhibits, displays, bulletin board
 - Community resource directory
 - Web page
 - Social media site, such as Facebook
 - Blog or Twitter
 - DVDs
 - Commercial and/or cable TV
 - Radio
 - Participation in community events such as fairs and parades
 - Advertising items
 - Direct mail promotion
 - Billboard
 - Surveys
 - [Library Research Service: Surveys](#)
 - [UPROC: Customer Satisfaction Survey](#)
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C. IMAGE AUDIT

Sample Library Image Audit (Thank you Sandy Scherba, former director of the Cromaine District Library!)

Completing this type of checklist requires walking through the library, clipboard in hand. Don't try to fill this out at your desk! Having board members, patrons, or cooperative staff fill it out may result in more useful feedback. Don't be discouraged when you find areas that are less than pleasing, finding problems to correct is the purpose of this exercise. You may find other topics on which to evaluate your library's image. This is just a start.

Physical Building & Grounds

- Is it attractive? Welcoming?
- Are there windows? Are they clean?
- Are window treatments clean?
- Are exterior displays easy-to-read and frequently changed?
- Is there landscaping? Is it maintained? Living?
- Is the grass cut regularly?
- Is your exterior sign visible? Easy-to-read? Even at night?
- Are your mailbox, book drop and flagpole in decent shape?
- Is there enough parking? Are the spaces clearly marked? Are they clean?

Entrance

- Is it clearly identified?
- Is your first impression positive? Safe?
- Is the door covered with tattered signs?
- Is this where your store empty boxes, snow shovels, yard tools?
- Is there a glass case that is empty? Or holding the same display for decades?
- Can the user orient him or her self easily?

Interior

- Is your overall impression positive?
- Is it well organized? Clean? Inviting?
- Is there a clear flow of traffic? Are the service desks in their most logical place?
- Is the furniture decrepit? Are the chairs stained or losing their padding?
- Does the wood furniture need to be dusted? Oiled?
- Is the shelving dusted? If painted, is it chipped?
- Is it cluttered? Does the circulation desk resemble a rummage sale?
- Is the color scheme pleasing?
- Are the walls clean? Do they need to be repainted?
- Is the flooring clean? Does it need to be replaced?
- Is there enough lighting? Or does it seem dim?
- Is it too noisy?
- Is the temperature comfortable?
- Are the restrooms easy to find? Are they clean? Well-stocked?
- Do the aisles accommodate strollers and wheelchairs?

Signs

- Are the hours visible from the outside of the building?
- Are directional signs inside easy to read? Professional looking? Consistent in size and font?
- Are the signs understandable or full of library jargon?
- Are they still accurate?

Collection

- Is it up-to-date and relevant to your community?
- Is the collection regularly weeded? (Be honest, now)
- Are the books leaning? Sitting at the edge of the shelf? Too crowded?
- Is there a logical pattern to the way books are shelved?
- Are there books on the top and bottom shelf?
- Do the books on the shelf look ratty and tatty? Do most have plastic or paper jackets?
- Can you read the spine labels?
- Are the paperbacks in decent shape? Are their racks functioning?

Displays and Bulletin Boards

- Are the boards orderly or so cluttered you can't read anything?
- Is the material timely? Regularly updated?
- Are displays filled with books? Are patrons allowed to take the books?
- Are the displays visibly noticeable in prime locations?

Publicity Materials

- Are the materials colorful and appealing? Up-to-date?
- Do they look professional? Typing neat? Print clear? Font consistent?
- Is the library's logo, slogan, hours, address, and phone number on each item?
- Are they well organized and displayed neatly?

Staff

- How are staff and volunteers dressed?
- Are their expressions and body-language positive? Friendly? Helpful?
- Are patrons greeted as they enter the library or approach a desk?
- Do staff point to shelves or accompany patrons to the material?
- Do staff routinely offer interlibrary loan?
- Are you satisfied by the impression created at the circulation desk? (This is where most libraries are judged.)
- How are patrons with fines and lost books treated?
- Is help available? Do they know how to listen? Conduct a reference interview?
- How does staff react to noisy children? To any child?
- Do children and teens receive the same quality of service as adults?
- Does the staff person or recording answering the phone sound like they have a smile on their face? Can they be easily understood?
- Does staff smile at patrons?

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[Library of Michigan](#)

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