

Mobilizing Probable and Super Supporters—what makes the difference

Research is important, but action is essential. To increase and sustain funding for public libraries in the United States, the qualitative and quantitative research must shape advocacy and marketing initiatives to raise awareness of the important role the library plays in the community and to increase support. More voters must vote yes at the polls for library referenda. More elected officials must be convinced that it is good for the community to put library referenda on the ballot or increase the library's share of the local public purse. And the library must be more visible and connected within the community, in the offices of local elected officials and on the minds of the library's most likely supporters.

The quantitative research identified that a sizable segment of library funding supporters exists—the library's Super Supporters and Probable Supporters. They can be identified and differentiated from U.S. residents less likely to support library funding. Their perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about the library can be documented and profiled. But can these two groups be moved to action?

Can more Probable Supporters be moved to vote yes at the ballot box? Can more Super Supporters be moved to act as catalysts within their communities to increase awareness of the role the library plays and the need for increased funding? What is required to motivate supporters to appeal to their public officials or to engage with their neighbors in dialogue about support for the libraries in their local communities?

How far will the 'latent passion' for the U.S. public library carry Super Supporters and Probable Supporters when it comes down to putting their hands in their pockets and persuading others in their communities to do likewise? Translating 'library love' into library funding support was tested during the ten focus group sessions.

A strange thing happens on the way to the voting booth

As detailed in Chapter 5, both Super Supporters and Probable Supporters exhibit strong, often passionate, appreciation for their public libraries. Projective research exercises with Super Supporters and Probable Supporters identified the foundation for that appreciation by exploring the group's early memories of the library. They discussed the group's current perceptions of the library and uncovered the 'latent passion' supporters hold for the library by asking what it might be like to live in their communities if the public library were to close.

Passion for the library was particularly strong when supporters were asked to consider a future without their libraries. The focus groups supported the insights from the quantitative research; for a subset of the U.S. population, belief in the unique value of the library is strong.

But a strange thing happens on the way to the voting booth.

When the focus group discussions moved from the passion for the U.S. public library as an "American right" critical to the health of the local community to the need for increased tax dollars, the mood changed. Tone of voice and body language shifted perceptibly within the group. The passion held by focus group members quickly went underground as the conversation shifted to the question of increasing taxes, their taxes, to fund the library.

Focus group participants spoke in very practical and logical terms about the political and economic barriers that exist to increasing local funding for the public libraries. The quantitative research phase of this study indicated that Probable Supporters and Super Supporters have a commitment and willingness to vote in favor of library funding increases. Super Supporter commitment was particularly strong, with 80% indicating that they would *definitely* vote 'yes' to a library referendum, ballot initiative or bond measure. Probable Supporter votes were not as certain, but still strong. On average, 47% of Probable Supporters indicate they would *definitely* vote 'yes' for a library funding initiative. During the focus group sessions, the concerns felt by Probable Supporters that led to hesitation in committing to a positive vote became clear.

Some of the barriers that were raised were ones that had been raised during the quantitative survey. For some Probable Supporters the issue was financial, and some members of the groups indicated that they simply did not wish to pay more in taxes. This was either due to an economic strain they felt personally, or due to a perception that local government was not fiscally responsible with the funds they already had at their disposal.

In some cases, the Probable Supporters knew very little about the current state of funding for their local public libraries and simply assumed that even if there was a funding problem "the funding would come from somewhere." The situation in Medford, Oregon, was particularly interesting. Even though the libraries in that town were closed at the time of the focus group research, the Probable Supporters were planning to vote 'no' at a pending library levy to raise the operational funds that would allow the library to open. This was not because they were against the library,

"Feeling good doesn't equate to voting 'yes' for a library referendum."

but they saw it as a personal statement against the local city council who they felt had mishandled funds that had previously been raised for the library and then placed into the general fund. Even in that situation, the residents believed that ultimately the funding situation would be resolved and the libraries would reopen.

“I am naïve to the funding and I feel there is a way to still have the library run well, but as a whole we need to be more responsible with our money so I was looking at it that way. Not sure more money is the answer, maybe better management.”

(Probable Supporter, Minneapolis, Minnesota)

“I am just not in general for a tax increase. I don’t know that most people are. I like the idea of funding the library but don’t know if I want to increase my taxes to do it. I would have to know more.”

(Probable Supporter, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

Some members of the groups claimed that the library was less relevant today with the advent of the Internet and that, even though the library was a ‘nice to have,’ it was not necessary for the community to thrive. There was also some discussion about the relative community need for the public library in comparison to other public services. Some supporters simply did not think that the library should be considered in the same category as police, fire and schools and this would limit their commitment to increased funding.

In contrast, other focus group members felt that communities should not see safety as the only community necessity and that the library was equally critical to a healthy community infrastructure. They also did not want the library to be put into the same category as police and fire, but for a different reason. They spoke of the vital role that the library plays in education and in bringing the community together and did not want to be asked to choose between safety and the educational and social fabric of the community. A small number of people in each group pointed out that the library played a unique role in making the Internet and other important resources available to members of the community who did not have that access themselves.

“I think it is unfair to put library with fire, police and schools. Life wouldn’t be as good without the library but we could make it work if we had to. The others you have to have. The library is a luxury—not something in the same category.”

(Probable Supporter, McPherson, Kansas)

“[If the library goes away] Not much will change—if you look at the way our society is going, and computers, the world is geared more towards high technology, as far as computers, etc.”

(Probable Supporter, Huntsville, Alabama)

Turning passion into dollars will take more than discussions of the many benefits of the local public library. A national library support campaign would need to create a bridge between the love of the library shared by both Super Supporters and Probable Supporters and the political and economic realities of the world that voters are living in today.

Messages that make a difference

Focus group members participated in an exercise aimed at uncovering the messages that could potentially move both Super Supporters and Probable Supporters to increase their commitment to financial library support and to enlist the support of others in their communities.

Focus group members were asked to create a set of compelling arguments they felt they could use to encourage citizens in their communities to support the public library. For the purposes of this exercise, support was not defined purely in terms of voting for an increase in taxes, but was left open to a broader interpretation (participate in meetings, e-mail local elected officials, etc.).

Several consistent support themes surfaced in the discussion across all five locations. Probable Supporters and Super Supporters felt that support for libraries can be improved by increasing the public's attention to four essential community benefits that the public library uniquely delivers:

- Equal access
- Shared community values (or teaches values)
- A sacred place
- Community stature.

Equal access

The focus groups were unanimous in their belief that the most compelling argument in support of funding increases for public libraries is the important truth that U.S. public libraries provide equal access to valuable information resources for all residents. The firm belief that 'equal access for all' to information and technology is a fundamental American right was shared by all focus group participants. This opinion was consistent regardless of participants' demography, location or political leaning.

Interestingly, the value proposition respondents agreed was the most compelling, 'equal access for all,' was not top-of-mind for Probable and Super Supporters. While incredibly powerful when articulated, this essential library value was not readily cited, but came out only after two hours of discussion and the use of projective research exercises. This important value was most often surfaced when respondents considered the consequences should their libraries become vulnerable.

Once it arose this topic typically generated significant discussion as people became passionate about the importance of 'equal access for all.' In several groups, access to information was seen as vitally important and the discussions turned to concerns about the technology readiness of their communities and their residents. The groups often came to a realization that many communities—often their own—were falling behind (the world or the country) in what was required to survive in today's information age. Participants also came to the realization that there were no other affordable ways to get access to electronic information without the public library.

Equal access to information and technology was an important benefit that only the public library was firmly committed to delivering.

‘Equal access to all’ was expressed as both a local and a national benefit. Several members noted that equal access meant that the library was a catalyst and caretaker for equality across all parts of society, giving anyone the opportunity for self-improvement or conversely, giving them no excuse not to improve. Without the ‘free’ public library, access to information, history, perspectives, technology and self-improvement would be limited to only certain members of society. This argument also swayed the subset of focus group participants who expressed relatively less concern about a possible future loss of the public library. They were particularly convinced by discussions that helped them realize that access to the Internet might be available for certain members of the community only at the public library.

The groups often came together in agreement that the library and its resources, specifically access to the Internet, was vital for every member of the community to realize their potential. Access to information was expressed as fundamental to American democracy.

“No kid should have an excuse for not having a book or knowing how to do research. If you don’t have a computer at home, you can go to the public library.”

(Probable Supporter, Huntsville, Alabama)

“It’s a great promoter of equality and democracy. Anyone can go, anyone can read what they want and make whatever use they want of it for whatever they want to pursue—cooking, science, crafts, entertainment.”

(Probable Supporter, Minneapolis, Minnesota)

Shared community values

In addition to providing equal access to information and technology, focus group participants agreed that the library plays a unique role in teaching important community values and responsibilities. This benefit was important enough to activate discussions that could lead to increased library funding support in their communities. Participants pointed out that the library teaches and reinforces important social values, particularly to children. The groups often questioned where else these values might be learned or practiced if the library went away.

The teaching of shared community values included such activities as:

- **Sharing community assets:** The idea of borrowing, using, caring for and returning something that is a shared public resource is considered valuable and unique to public libraries.
- **Respect for the community:** By caring for community resources at the library, residents exhibit respect for others in their community. The act of taking turns (checking out books, using computers) and remaining quiet in certain areas of the library builds and develops a sense of community belonging and respect.

- **Self-reliance:** The idea that a child (or adult) can investigate, explore and ultimately make personal decisions is a core benefit of the library and of a society.

“It’s one of the few things that truly can provide a sense of community. It doesn’t belong to anyone but to all of us. It’s a good lesson in respect, being quiet, signing up for Internet time, returning books on time. It’s kind of a good building block in respect.”

(Super Supporter, Minneapolis, Minnesota)

A sacred place

For many Super Supporters and Probable Supporters, the library is seen as a ‘sacred place’ that has distinct and unique qualities that make it worthy of increased financial support. Focus group members described the ‘transformational’ qualities of the library in this context:

- **Quiet:** a place where anyone can think, escape and relax
- **Order:** a place of predictable organization and processes
- **Freedom:** an opportunity to think and read about almost anything
- **Safety:** compared to other public places, the library is a safe place—a safe physical location and a safe mental space, a place of open and forward thinking
- **Social bonding:** a location that brings together individuals, groups, friends, family and future families.

“It’s a gathering place where lots of different people can listen to someone else’s ideas, whether spoken or written.”

(Super Supporter, Medford, Oregon)

Community stature

The library’s importance to community stature was the fourth fundamental reason supporters cited to support the library. Focus group participants voiced a firm belief that a community that was not willing to support a library was abandoning its core values, sending a negative signal to the world about what the community does and doesn’t believe in. The library is a community’s public symbol of intellectual curiosity and respect for learning. It conveys the message that the community seeks knowledge and advancement. Focus group participants were concerned that residents might be inclined to leave a community that didn’t value the public enough to keep the library open. They also expressed concern that potential residents might not consider a community that had allowed its library to close.

By its presence, the public library signaled a community commitment to forward progress. The best communities were seen to have a flourishing public library. No library was equivalent to no future—to stagnation.

Supporters felt it is the responsibility of the library to help individuals reach their fullest potential and it is the residents’ responsibility to ensure that the community, as a whole, reaches its full potential. Focus group members felt that supporting the

public library is equivalent to supporting every community member’s right to equal access to information, technology and learning.

There was concern that without a library, the divide between a community’s ‘haves’ and its ‘have-nots’ would grow wider. The public library was one of the few places that could directly serve to close that gap.

And finally, the focus groups believed that considering the library as having equal community status to other local services was an important and powerful message. The library is as important a part of the community infrastructure as the fire department, the police department and public schools. Economics shouldn’t determine which service to fund—all should be funded.

“It represents a commitment by the community to cultural and intellectual activities.”

(Probable Supporter, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

“It’s necessary for us to continue growing as a society and have ideas for the future. To always be developing in a positive, creative way. We always have to be open to knowledge and I see the library as one place to help us gain that knowledge.”

(Super Supporter, Medford, Oregon)

Messages that drive library funding support



Source: *From Awareness to Funding*, OCLC, 2008

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In summary, Super Supporters and Probable Supporters identified four compelling arguments that can drive support for public libraries and public library funding: (1) The library provides equal access. (2) The library teaches important and shared community values. (3) The library holds an important, even sacred, place in the community. (4) The library is a community symbol of freedom of thought and progress; the library creates status for its community.

The focus group research reinforced the quantitative findings that the library's most likely funding supporters view their library, and the librarian, as an essential, transformational community asset. It is important to note that Probable Supporters and Super Supporters did not primarily discuss the library's value in terms of individual or specific library services. They did not equate the library's value to the library's book collection or materials. The objects themselves were not seen as the compelling reason to financially support the library. The impact and value of the library to individual lives and communities are what matters most to library funders.

It is also important to note that while the transformational powers of the library are the defining values to the most adamant supporters, these emotions and beliefs are 'below the surface.' It was not until the focus groups were engaged in discussion that these library values surfaced. These emotions and beliefs are latent even with the most ardent library supporters. Outside the focus group room, these beliefs will easily remain latent when other community issues are pressing or when a funding request is simply that, a request for more dollars, not more value.

The findings of the focus groups strongly suggest that any marketing and advocacy program aimed at increasing library funding will need to frame library funding in both 'value' and 'economic' (i.e., tax) terms. The programs will need to awaken the latent passion that the top library supporters feel about the essential and unique role of the public library in their community, in all communities. Any potential program must reach both the hearts and the economic minds of Probable and Super Supporter voters.

“If you weren't a cattleman or a farmhand, there wasn't much in the future. I realized at an early age that the library was the ticket out of there. Knowledge is truly power. The more you have, the better off you're going to be.

“We are well behind the curve in the Internet age. These people are thinking about what's happening. If we can't think and adapt to a changing environment, we're going to be left behind. The days of a strong back and weak mind are over.

“People who've been exposed to libraries realize that there are a lot of other cultures and things out there that a small town of 4,000 doesn't provide access to. The library is literally a window on the world.”

(Super Supporter, McPherson, Kansas)

Testing campaign messages

Creating a library support brand

The problem a library support campaign strategy must consider is how to turn the tide of dwindling library funding support in an environment where people think libraries are becoming less relevant, where we can anticipate tougher tax choices and where market-specific conditions vary widely.

The proposed solution is to create and promote a brand—not a library product brand focused on marketing library consumption (i.e., usage) but a library *support* brand. The brand must do more than position the library as relevant—it must activate citizen participation and positive funding behavior.

Based on the research findings, the OCLC and Leo Burnett team developed a library support brand strategy and outlined options for messaging and specific marketing tactics for a library support campaign to move the most likely voters from *probable* support of library referenda to *definite* support.

The brand strategy and campaign messaging options were based on the following communications objectives:

Make the library relevant for the 21st century.

Instill a sense of urgency by putting the library in the consideration set for local funding with other public services, like police, parks and fire.

Activate a conversation about how the library is a vital part of the community's infrastructure and future.

Several creative concepts were developed based on these communications objectives. Each creative idea was embodied in the form of an image and a messaging narrative that could form the basis for a library support brand and associated campaign.

Qualitative round two

A second round of field research was conducted to test potential messages and message platforms. The research aimed to identify the most compelling articulation of potential messages that would drive Super Supporters and Probable Supporters to refresh their core beliefs in the library, engage in discussions with elected officials and others members of their communities, and ultimately act in support of increased library funding.

Campaign development and field test

Creative concepts were developed based on the findings from the quantitative and qualitative research. Five concepts were developed for testing. Each concept was embodied in a messaging narrative and a supporting visual image. The goal was not to test potential advertisements but rather to generate reactions, impressions and feedback to messaging and imagery that could guide the further development of an effective messaging platform for a national library support campaign.

The creative directions were evaluated by five focus groups of Probable Supporters and one focus group of Super Supporters in a subset of the same geographies where the initial focus groups were conducted (McPherson, Kansas; Huntsville, Alabama; and Minneapolis, Minnesota). Phone review sessions were also conducted with elected officials using the same creative concepts.

Participants were exposed to the five concepts individually and asked a series of questions regarding their interpretations and reactions. The Probable Supporters, Super Supporters and elected officials were asked to react to the concepts without any previous discussion about libraries or their perceptions or usage of the library. The concepts were randomly selected and rotated to avoid order bias. Groups were not asked to come to a consensus on the best creative direction, but instead to evaluate the concepts individually.

For each concept, participants were asked what they perceived the concept was asking them to do (i.e., use the library, support the library, etc.). After all the concepts had been exposed, they were asked a number of ‘compare and contrast’ questions to gauge the effectiveness of each concept along the following evaluation dimensions:

- Which concepts, if any, make you see the library differently?
- Which concepts make the library seem more important to your community?
- Which concepts would you talk about with your friends, family and neighbors?
- Which concepts would incite you to take some action to support the library?
- Which concepts, if any, would motivate you to vote yes on a library levy?

The efficacy of a concept to generate active conversation was also observed and asked directly. The goal was to evaluate the concept’s ability to generate reactions and impressions that had the power to refresh core beliefs in the library, engage elected officials and ultimately be the foundation of marketing and advocacy programs with the potential to increase library funding.

An effective creative concept must not only appeal to one or more of the four unique, essential values of the library (equal access, shared community values, a sacred place and community stature), but it must also reposition the library to be seen as an essential part of the community infrastructure for the 21st century. As discussed in Chapter 5, for many of the most ardent supporters, the Internet has changed the landscape and the library was seen as losing relevance to themselves and to their children and grandchildren. To respond to this reality, concepts were presented

that addressed the issue of the Internet head-on, accepting the fact that for many Probable Supporters, a discussion of the Internet's impact on the library was essential to effectively positioning the library as a critical part of the community's infrastructure.

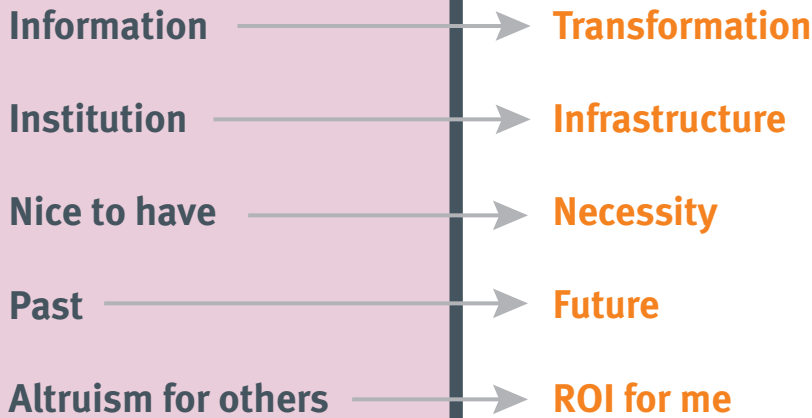
An effective library advocacy and marketing campaign in support of increased library funding must ensure that the library is positioned or, if necessary, repositioned as both a unique and essential part of the community infrastructure. The library cannot be viewed as a place of information, an institution that is 'nice to have' but not essential, or more important to the past than to the future. Instead, an effective messaging platform must present today's library as a place of transformation. The library is a vital part of the community infrastructure, as vital as fire, police, schools and parks. It is a necessity, not a 'nice to have,' for a community prepared to compete in the future. The library offers a return to individuals as well as to the community. The value of the library speaks to both the hearts and the economic minds of the target groups, the library Probable Supporters and Super Supporters.

Overall, the feedback to the concepts from Probable Supporters, Super Supporters and elected officials provided important information. Each of the creative concepts satisfied at least some of the evaluation criteria for building a compelling message platform that could refresh the core beliefs of Super Supporters and Probable Supporters, and had the power to drive some level of increased community discussion and support for library funding.

The concepts tested all resonated against one or more aspects supporters believed to be true about the library. Each concept tapped into the latent passion supporters feel about the role of the library. When asked to compare and contrast concepts, the outcome from focus groups varied. Interestingly, each concept was selected as a 'favorite' of one or more respondents in all focus groups. Respondents often wanted to combine concepts.

The library needs to be positioned as a vital part of the community infrastructure

The library must be repositioned. The library can no longer be viewed as a historical institution that is nice to have, but rather as a vital part of the community infrastructure.



Information: The library is one of many sources of information. It could potentially be replaced by a combination of bookstores, schools, coffee shops and the Internet.

Transformation: The library is not about 'information,' it is about 'transformation,' for people and my community.

Institution: The library is an institution sometimes associated with an out-of-date building, aged materials and limited accessibility. (The library has limited hours, the Internet is available 24/7.)

Infrastructure: The library is not an outdated institution. It is a vital part of community infrastructure.

Nice to have: Availability of so many other options for information and learning make the library a 'nice to have' service, rather than a necessity.

Necessity: The library is not simply a 'nice to have' service—it is a necessity. It provides equal access to technology, helping bridge the digital divide.

Past: The library is an important part of supporters' lives, but they question whether it is still relevant for their children and grandchildren.

Future: The library is not a nostalgic building or set of programs. The library provides services and infrastructure for the future.

Altruism for others: The library is less important to them, but it is important for 'other people' in the community.

Return on investment: Library funding support is not based only on a vague sense of altruism, but based on a real economic return for individuals, families and communities.

The feedback to the creative directions indicated strongly that the right campaign can generate the desired response from our target voter segments, repositioning the library as relevant for the 21st century, instilling a sense of urgency to support the library in various ways, and activating conversation with their friends and families. With only a small amount of suggestion, the respondents expressed a desire to find out more and specifically find out what their local elected officials thought about funding the library.

The participants preferred concepts they believed most clearly embodied the role of the library in providing ‘equal access for all,’ linking the library to the resources that everyone needs to live and succeed in today’s society. In particular, the favored concepts were often linked to the importance of access to technology that is provided uniquely at the public library. Several respondents spoke about the library as a right—not a privilege—that should be available to all Americans. They talked about the ‘American right to freedom of thought’; ‘equal access for the haves and have nots’; and ‘one of the American freedoms in the land of opportunity.’

The Probable Supporters and Super Supporters did not need much prompting to move them to a discussion of the library support problem and they did not respond negatively when the issue was raised. Merely saying ‘support the library’ in the messaging concepts made participants discuss whether the libraries in their communities were vulnerable and they began to suggest ways that they might respond in support.

The concepts generated similar responses in both small and urban markets. Although the three cities included in the research were experiencing different economic and civic dynamics, the creative concept evaluations were consistent and positive, indicating that the right campaign message could bridge a variety of market environments.

The most effective ideas generated a lot of conversation. An effective library support campaign will need to generate conversation and mobilize library supporters to carry the message to others in the community as part of a grassroots component to the campaign, so the ability to generate debate is a critical element of any campaign message. Participants often took the discussion to other relevant topics, inciting a sense of urgency around the idea that in a time of change and new ideas, “we have to keep up.” This notion was expressed both in terms of keeping up with technology and keeping up as a nation generally. The most effective concepts connected to both the latent passion Probable Supporters and Super Supporters have for the library and to the economic conversation required to change voting or funding behavior.

Elected officials gravitated to the same concepts and messages as the Probable Supporters and Super Supporters. They believed that an effective library support campaign would have the ability to motivate them in support of the library in their official roles and as members of their local communities. Support for the library was considered to be a platform that they could easily talk about and that their constituents could understand.

Achieving sufficient voting support

The quantitative and qualitative research indicates that it is possible to create an effective messaging platform with the potential to motivate the Probable Supporters and Super Supporters to increase their involvement and voting support of library funding initiatives. But a key question remains: Will a focus on these two market segments provide sufficient increase in the number of committed favorable votes to increase the passage rate of public library levies? Is the target market large enough to achieve the needed result?

A sample of public library levy results

The following list provides a brief sample of 2007/2008 public library operating levies, illustrating that library levies are often decided by narrow, sometimes very narrow, margins. It is not at all unusual for a library referendum to pass or fail by only a few votes. Levies are often placed on the ballot more than once before passing.

2007

Douglas County Libraries, CO	Failed	49.8% / 50.2%
Sugar Grove Public Library, IL	Failed	47% / 53%
Kingston Public Library, MA	Failed	48% / 52%
Pataskala Public Library, OH	Failed	49.9% / 50.1%
Jackson County Library, OR	Failed	42% / 58%
Edith Wheeler Memorial Library, CT	Passed	52% / 48%
Midlothian Public Library, IL	Passed	51% / 49%
Bay City Library System, MI	Passed	51% / 49%
Wickliffe Public Library, OH	Passed	51% / 49%
Tillamook County Library, OR	Passed	56% / 44%

2008

Mahomet Public Library District, IL	Failed	44% / 56%
John Mosser Public Library District, IL	Failed	46% / 54%
Wayne County Public Library, OH	Failed	48% / 52%
St. Paris Public Library, OH	Failed	49.8% / 50.2%
Stayton Public Library, OR	Passed	53% / 47%

Sources: Library Referenda 2007: A Mixed Ballot Bag. *Library Journal*, 3/15/2008 (all 2007 results)
Champaign County, Illinois February 5, 2008 General Primary Election Official Results (Mahomet Public Library District)
Knox County Clerk Election Results 2008 General Primary Proposition for John Mosser Library District
Ohio Secretary of State, Report of Votes Cast on Tax Questions for the Primary Election Held on March 4, 2008
(Wayne County Public Library, St Paris Public Library)
Marion County, Oregon, May 20, 2008 Primary Election Final Official Results (Stayton Public Library)

Could a library support campaign targeted at Probable Supporters and Super Supporters make a difference?

The segmentation research findings were applied to create a model of a hypothetical voting scenario using information known about current library levy results.

The model assumes a community with a total population of 50,000 and an eligible voting population of 37,500 (75% of the total population), reflecting the average U.S. eligible voting population.

The model assumes a 30% voter turnout rate to reflect a typical local election.

The model assumes the hypothetical levy failed by a narrow margin, with 48% of votes for and 52% of votes against. The percentage of votes required to pass the levy is assumed to be 50.1%.

The advocacy research provided the following information:

- Together, Probable Supporters and Super Supporters represent 57% of people who vote in local elections:
 - Super Supporters = 12% of *local* election voters
 - Probable Supporters = 45% of *local* election voters
- While a positive vote by the Super Supporters (80%) is almost guaranteed, far fewer Probable Supporters (47%) are *definitely* committed to voting in favor of a library referendum, ballot initiative or bond measure.
- The combined voting patterns of the two target market segments are as follows:
 - Together, 54% of Probable and Super Supporters are expected to ‘*definitely* vote yes’ on a local library referendum (**Definite Supporters**)
 - 13% ‘*might/would* vote no’ on a local library referendum (**Unlikely Supporters**)
 - 33% will ‘*probably* vote yes’ on a local library referendum (**Leverageable Supporters**)

The voting statistics provided by the market segmentation were applied to the hypothetical community to create the model and evaluate the potential impact of a library support campaign.

Hypothetical library levy model

How to read the chart on page 6-17

The model quantifies the potential impact of a library support campaign targeted at Probable Supporters and Super Supporters by applying voting statistics from the market segmentation research to a hypothetical library levy.

- The community modeled has a population of 50,000 residents.
- Seventy-five percent (75%) of the population (37,500) are eligible to vote. This percentage is based on historical U.S. voting statistics.
- Similar to many local elections, only 30% of eligible voters (11,250) turn out to vote.
- Based on the advocacy research, 57% of actual voters are Super Supporters or Probable Supporters (6,413). The research suggests that this target group can be divided as follows:
 - 54% of the target segment (3,463) are expected to *definitely* vote yes **(Definite Supporters)**
 - 13% of the target segment (834) are expected to vote no **(Unlikely Supporters)**
 - 33% of the target segment (2,116) say they will ‘*probably* vote yes,’ meaning that some will vote yes and some will vote no **(Leverageable Supporters)**.
- In order to change the result of the failed levy to pass, an additional 236 votes are needed for a majority of 5,636 yes votes (50.1%).
- An additional 236 votes would require 11% of Leverageable Supporters (2,116) to vote yes. 236 votes is 2.1% of the total number of votes cast.
- Therefore, in order to be successful, the library support campaign would need to persuade 11% of Leverageable Supporters to vote yes when they would have otherwise voted no.

Like many failed referenda, this hypothetical levy failed by a relatively small margin. While it is likely that an effective library support campaign would increase the number of favorable votes across all voting segments (Barriers to Support, Probable Supporters and Super Supporters) the voting scenario applies a conservative approach and assesses the outcome based on increasing the commitment of only the most likely ‘movable’ voters in the target market. The model analyzes a campaign’s impact on only ‘Leverageable Supporters’—voters in the Probable Supporters and Super Supporters tiers who indicate they will *probably* vote yes on a local library referendum.

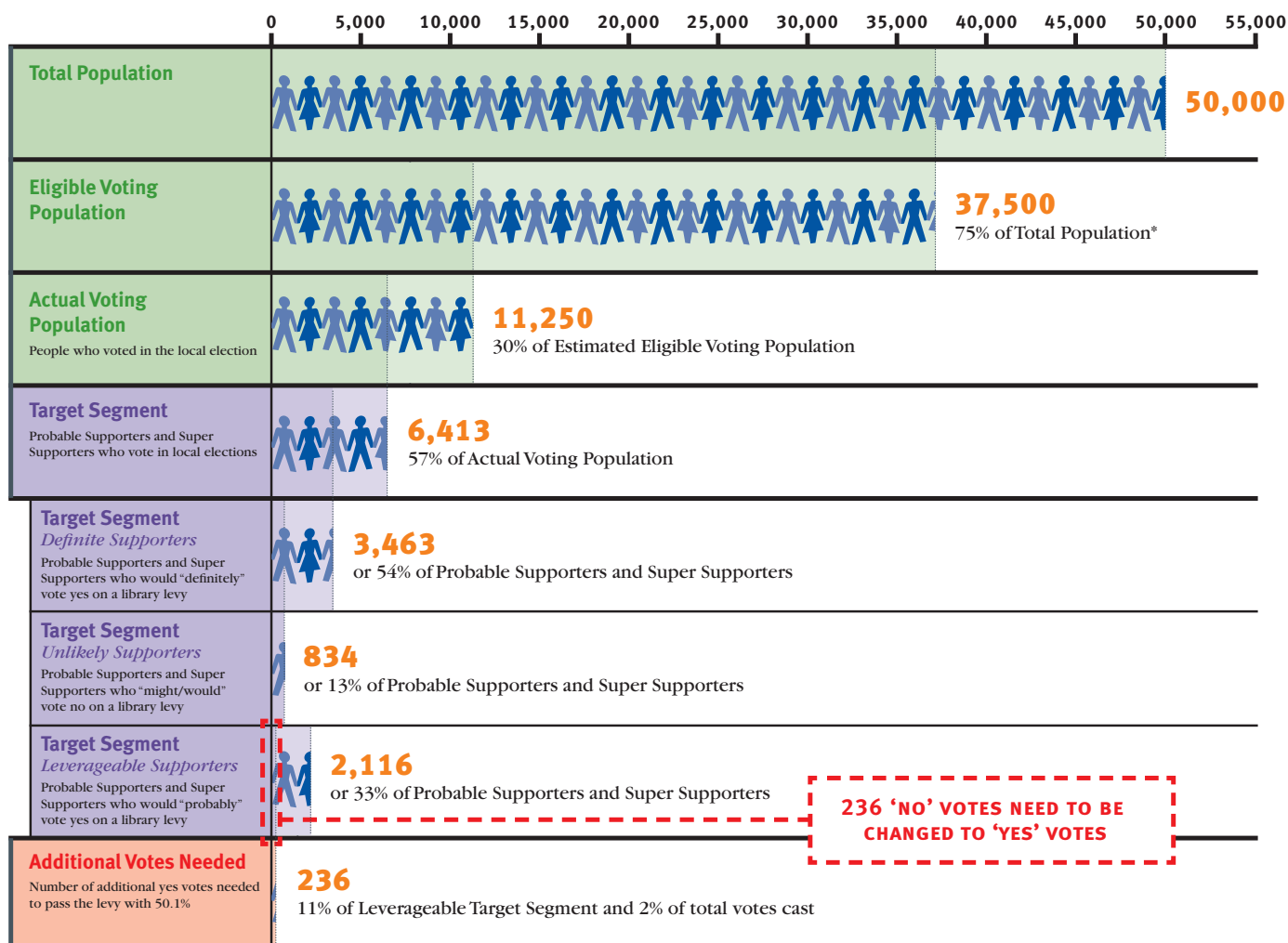
It is also realistic to assume that an effective library support campaign would increase the number of favorable votes from the ‘Unlikely Supporters’ (Probable and Super Supporters who indicated they ‘might/would vote no’ on a local library referendum). The impact of moving this group was not included in the conservative voter scenario.

Hypothetical library levy model

11,250 VOTES

5,400 YES VOTES (48%) 5,850 NO VOTES (52%)

— 236 ADDITIONAL VOTES NEEDED —



*Based on national average as calculated from the U.S. Census Bureau's annual American Community Survey

Source: From Awareness to Funding, OCLC, 2008

How achievable is it to change the outcome of a levy by 2–5% or more by targeting Probable and Super Supporters? Based on consultation with political consultants who work specifically with public service funding initiatives, shifts in voter behavior or market share in these ranges are realistically achievable.

The research suggests that a large-scale library support campaign targeted to Probable Supporters and Super Supporters could provide a large enough increase in 'yes' votes to improve the success rate of library levies in many communities across the United States.

Mobilizing Probable and Super Supporters—what makes the difference