



## Collections Advocacy Toolkit

### Repeating Your Message and Following Up

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In addition to social media, other types of communication—such as face-to-face, print, and email—can effectively mobilize potential and active supporters. Using these forms in combination, you can shape a coherent, year-round advocacy campaign.

Each form of communication requires a different approach and writing style. To generate this variety, engage staff and volunteers when creating materials. Prepare and issue brochures, postcards, and email blasts to coincide with exhibits and events. Schedule the release of newsletters and annual reports to coincide with your fiscal calendar, highlighting goals, accomplishments, and gifts and donations. Talk about your organization to people you meet and to those you want to influence.

### Face-to-Face Communications

#### Casual Conversation

Take the chance to tell someone you do not know about your organization while standing in line at the grocery store or meeting new people at a party; you may win over a new member or at least a first time visitor.

#### The “Elevator Speech”

Practice giving a 30-second monologue—one that lasts about the length of an elevator ride—that provides a brief description of what you do and why. This can be useful when answering people’s questions about what you do (and you don’t have to reserve it for actual elevator trips).

#### Public Presentations

Speak to groups in your community about your organization. Often, school groups, libraries, assisted living facilities, and civic organizations need speakers for their events. When choosing groups, stick to audiences you already know while you develop your material and style. Think about your audience’s interests and needs. Decide on your purpose and what action you want your audience to take. Present a simple message and think of different ways that you can illustrate it. Support your statements with facts as well as anecdotes. Make notes about what catches the attention of the audience and tailor future

presentations accordingly. Practice. Consider joining a local speaking club such as Toastmasters. Toastmasters members likely form part of the [demographics](#) your organization wants to reach.

## Thank You Notes

Informal, handwritten “thank-you” notes are the next best thing to a hand shake. Send them to convey your gratitude to those who contribute to your organization, no matter how small the gift. Keep the note short. Address the person by name and single out the specifics of the person’s contribution, whether the donation is a financial gift, a recommendation to a potential new member, or several weekends of volunteer work. Mention how that person’s contribution made a difference to the organization or to the communities the organization serves. Colorful, off-beat stationery with your organization’s logo or tag line would be appropriate for these informal gestures. For large gifts and donations, prepare formal letters on letterhead stationery.

## Printed Communications

### Brochures

Colorful, printed booklets or sheets folded in half, or thirds, catch the eye of the public everywhere. Use them to promote your exhibits, programs, and services while providing the public with your precise contact and visiting information in one place. Include your institution’s phone and fax numbers, address (with map), hours of operation, website address, sponsors (if any), and dates for scheduled events. Display, hand out, or mail brochures. For effectiveness, select one theme and keep the text brief.

### Mailers and Postcards

People still enjoy receiving personalized mail. Mailers and postcards with your distinctive logo, images, sharp typography, and a succinct message will be noticed. They are easily read at a glance and avoid obstacles such as an envelope that must be opened or hard-to-decipher blocks of text. Use the postcard to notify the recipient about an upcoming event or program of interest to them. Use mailers to announce a fundraising campaign or for invitations to exclusive events. A mailer requires the recipient to return the card with a commitment of a pledge or an RSVP, creating a sense of urgency—the recipient must respond quickly to be included.

### Press Releases

Most newspapers, weeklies, wire services, and radio and television stations depend on well-crafted press releases to learn more about what is going on in their broadcast areas and to fill gaps in their reporting. Develop a list of local media services and learn the names of their bureau chiefs. In one page, inform your reader of the exciting “who, what, when and where” of your event and give details on how to contact you for more information. Include relevant quotes from members of your community. Distributing informative, truthful press releases is a judicious, inexpensive form of public relations that allows you to position your organization in a positive way over time. The receipt of a large contribution or a significant grant presents an excellent opportunity for creating a press release. Grant-making agencies such as the Institute of Museum and Library Services provide [Communication Kits](#) to help you get out the news.

## Annual Reports

The traditional means for making an organization's financial statements public, annual reports also offer a vehicle to reinforce goals, mark achievements, and celebrate contributors. Contemporary annual reports resemble exhibits: they present numbers in graphic form, use photographic essays to tell stories, and have interesting formats, such as see-through or pop-out pages. Some annual reports, such as the [Grammy Museum](#) and [Please Touch Museum](#) reports, have become collector's items. If you want your annual report to be read every day, consider turning it into an attractive calendar.

## Electronic Communications

### E-news and E-blasts

Busy people still appreciate the convenience of receiving emails about developments and upcoming events at their favorite organizations. Electronic mail services can be automated to alert members about membership renewals, special offers, and new acquisitions or publications, which may be helpful to small organizations with few staff members. Include an e-news sign-up box on your website.

### Websites

Think of a website as a virtual replica of your organization located on the World Wide Web. A website may be made up of anywhere from one page to hundreds of related pages that include text, images, color graphics, animation, and sound. The aim of websites is to interest individuals in the activities of your organization, and to provide them with information they may seek.

Many small museums and historical societies serve their audiences with websites that provide links to related resources, online maps, searchable digital collections, mobile applications, and the means for making purchases and donations. These online tools were nonexistent less than twenty years ago, but today they are essential for establishing a virtual presence for any organization and guiding potential visitors to your door.

You can post most print-based items to your website, along with photo galleries and catalogs of your collections. Websites reach audiences internationally, well beyond the reach of the best-maintained member list.