

SECTION II. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

Public relations can be defined as a function of management in which libraries establish and maintain open two-way communication between the organization and the public. Marketing deals with the function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization and plans and executes a program to earn public understanding and acceptance. Libraries belong in the spotlight of our communities. It's our responsibility as the manager to make it happen!

Library's Image

The library director is responsible for promoting library services and programs and nurturing a good association with the public. Community use of the library relies in part on the public's image of what the library can offer. Offering good service and promoting relevant library activities is essential. Service is the core of your library. Your library must meet patrons' needs with speed and accuracy and anticipate community concerns. Fostering a good relationship between staff and the public should be a high priority. Competent, courteous staff who make library users feel welcome by creating a positive environment is invaluable. A telephone is to be considered a vital element in public relations. By using the telephone, a patron can ascertain if the library is open or discover if the materials desired are available.

Public relations begin in the library itself. Developing that image of libraries depends on principles of packaging. Care should be given to the manner of speaking, answering the telephone, and responding to the endless questions that flow in. Very basic to public relations is an attractive, neat library that offers the services people seek. Proper maintenance of collections, adequate directional signs and explanatory placards will increase good will. Library users should enjoy their visits to the library. Bright colors, simple directions, attractive people, comfortable surroundings, willingness to serve, smartness, style, simplicity, and smiles will give your library a positive image.

The library's most powerful avenue for good relations is the word-of-mouth advertising given by the satisfied patron; it is also the least expensive!

Publicity

Making citizens aware of library resources requires constant and imaginative effort. The library's annual report can be an effective promotional tool. It should include financial, circulation, and reference statistics, photos, and short features on the past year's accomplishments and activities. Your taxpayers have a right to know. Give them a clear concept of the workings of the library! Libraries that have been surveyed can profitably capitalize on the survey as a public relations device. Surveys provide your library patrons the opportunity to express their needs and opinions of their library. This aims the director toward securing better personnel, better methods, and better financial support that will produce a better library.

Bookmarks, flyers, and newsletters done with imaginative preparation can be used to denote special happenings, services, or hours open and address of the library. Booklists in certain subject areas or lists of new books or videos with short annotations are great promoters. Bulletin boards and posters can be a very versatile means of publicity. They can stimulate interest in selected books or subjects and call attention to resources or services or programs. Displays or exhibits can reach a wide audience by informing users and potential users of what is available in the library. Remember to celebrate and capitalize on National Library Week - it's a marketing event designed just for libraries. Check with the State Library; there may be a statewide promotional package available. Campaigns for funding are another tool to create public awareness. An effort has to be made to the whole community to thoroughly inform them of financial facts and library needs (see [Tax Elections](#) in this handbook). Check with your Chamber of Commerce to identify happenings and interest points in your area, and also check such sources as [Chase's Annual Events](#) for ideas.

Public relations outside the library are absolutely essential for lively libraries. Make a contact at your local newspaper; find out about their deadlines and news-related formats; and offer to provide filler materials to the editor when needed. Radio stations will air public service announcements that are typically less than 30 seconds long. Offer to participate in interview and talk shows on pertinent topics. Local television stations should receive media releases and stories with human interest and visual appeal. Larger public libraries have TV production studios for the production of spots or short subjects. Some of the items produced are for release to TV stations or cable networks, and some for cassette utilization by the library's videocassette viewers and for home lending.

Programming

Programming in the library offers the public an opportunity to see the lively, welcoming side of service that many people may not expect. Goals for programming should be to enrich the background and stimulate the interest of library users who currently use the library, to attempt to draw into the library people who are not necessarily intrigued, and to provide library users with programs that are not available anywhere else. When you decide you have a need for a particular program, search for a presenter or a resource person with a specialty and build your program around that specific topic.

The library is the perfect place to offer many types of programs. Special events or programming for children and teens could include story hours, reading clubs, book reviews, film programs, puppet shows, summer reading programs, storytelling events, Children's Book Week and the list goes on. Adult programming can include any type of informative program that would enhance their day-to-day lives. Consider adult offerings such as computer training, literacy programs, investment seminars, performing and creative arts, travel lectures, library's anniversary, guest authors and poets, lectures, National Library Week, discussion groups, and book talks.

Many programs of this nature can be done free of charge - just do it enthusiastically! Remember communities change or expand; so should the library's programming (see [Planning](#) in this handbook). The director must keep in mind the community's needs and continue to evaluate public programming.

Community Relations

The library should be represented in various community activities. The library director should offer to address community meetings. Speaking engagements offer the opportunity for a "commercial" about the library, new services, or upcoming programs. Always provide a handout, such as bookmarks, brochures, booklists, or flyers on future events. Getting out of the library gives you the opportunity to meet people who do not use the library.

The library should be ready to co-sponsor or supplement non-sponsored programs with bibliographies, information services, and displays and to lend book collections to special groups such as the mental health association, Bible schools, or garden clubs. Brochures on city and parish officials and community groups would be another way to reach the public. Also, a successful way to attract and hold the support of community groups and

agencies is to ask them for specific assistance in promoting a program or project. It could be the garden club working to develop a better garden collection or planting shrubs for Arbor Day; Boy Scouts moving shelves and books; church youth groups preparing exhibits in the churches for National Library Week; or the AARP promoting the Blind and Physically Handicapped materials and services. Citizens who become involved make life-long friends of the library (see [Friends](#) in this handbook).

Another role of the library in the community is working with the local school system. The director should establish a good working relationship with the school administration. The library can offer cooperative efforts with school librarians, such as class visits, teacher loans, reserves for school assignments, summer reading programs, and library tours. Also, an effort should be made to identify other youth groups such as Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and to have knowledge of their aims and programs. You should be aware of parent groups such as the PTA, Teen-Parent Support Groups, and others. Family literacy is of major importance in the 90's. Some programming should be geared to the entire family. Programming might include a special Family Reading Night or a program on books to read aloud or books on parenting.

Trustees

Public relations are of vital interest to trustees. Board actions affect the public's concept of the library. Trustees should not be inhibited by public opinion but should take action for the public good and inform the public. Trustees and the director should work closely together in planning the trustee's role. Some specific suggestions for trustees to assist are speeches on library topics at public meetings; board studies on library equipment or building problems; and contacts in the community with leaders and organizations. Trustees should be active members of the community, so they can also be sensitive to community needs. Trustees can enhance library relations with outside channels in a very positive manner. (See the [Handbook for Louisiana Library Trustees](#)).

BOARD MEETINGS AND MINUTES

Library board meetings are the official business meetings at which your library board makes the policy and financial decisions for your library system.

Positive Suggestions to Consider

Boards need to be as positive as possible and to deal only with appropriate issues. Board bylaws provide the general structure for the board's work. Bylaws should cover guidelines for the meetings of the board, the officers of the board, the library director, resolutions, committees of the board, order of business, and amendments to the bylaws. (See the Handbook for Louisiana Library Trustees for further details of bylaws.)

Another suggestion is to elect a new chairperson and other officers annually or every two years. Rotating leadership responsibilities can create a stronger board.

Meet in different libraries throughout the community or system. This creates high visibility and gives trustees the chance to become acquainted with the library staff, the buildings, and the collections throughout the library system.

Plan meetings on a regular, annual schedule. Select specific dates, times, and places six to twelve months in advance.

Follow Robert's Rules of Order for conducting the business meetings.

Board committee meetings need to be held prior to the board meeting in order to save time. Committees of the board make recommendations to the whole board in order for the board to make a decision for the library. Remember the director is present at board meetings in nearly all libraries and may act as the secretary.

"Sunshine Law"

The open meeting or "Sunshine" Law (L.R.S. 42:4.1-13) applies to your library board meetings and board committees. Never forget that the community "owns" the library and that the trustees govern on behalf of the citizens. The media and citizens are always welcome. Announce the regular board meetings as set by your bylaws with written public

notice in January for the whole year. For special or rescheduled meetings, written public notice must be given at least twenty-four hours before the meeting. Written public notice includes publishing the notice in the official journal or posting notice at the library or wherever the meeting is held. All decisions must be formally adopted in an open board meeting to be legally binding. The exceptions to the open meetings law are listed in L.R.S. 42:6.1.

Getting Organized for the Meeting

Before the board meeting, the director should do the following: plan the meeting carefully; discuss with the president items to go on the agenda for all members; prepare the agenda in advance; mail or distribute the agenda and other information in advance, generally at least a week; and publish or post public notice of meetings.

During the meeting, the director should assist the board in focusing on issues at hand; following the agenda and establishing order of business as stated in the bylaws; and establishing action items. At the end of the meeting, the director should see that the progress on decisions is evaluated; that the next meeting is announced; and that the meeting is adjourned officially.

After the meeting the director should mail minutes to the board members, follow through on action items, and begin planning the next meeting. Minutes are an official public record and are written by the secretary. You may want to send your minutes to the governing authority.

Sample Format for an Agenda

Date: _____
 Place: _____
 Address: _____
 Time: _____

	<u>ORDER OF BUSINESS</u>	<u>PERSON RESPONSIBLE</u>	<u>ACTION NEEDED</u>
1.	Call To Order	President	
2.	Roll Call	Secretary	
3.	Minutes	Secretary	Approve
4.	Statistical & Financial Reports	Director	Present/Discuss
5.	Old Business	Board	Review/Decisions/ Actions
6.	New Business	Board	Review/Decisions/ Actions
7.	Reports of Committees	Committee Chairs	Present/Discuss
8.	Other		
9.	Adjournment	Board	Approve

Sample Format for Minutes

1. Name/Title of Board
2. Type of Meeting - Regular or Special Meeting
3. Date, Time, and Place
4. Members Present, Absent, and Guests
5. Agenda - Items discussed and general description of meeting's content
6. Decisions/Actions:
 - Who, What, When
 - Record the number of votes for and against
 - State that the motion carried or failed
7. Next Meeting - Next meeting's date, time, place, and preliminary agenda items
8. Attachments

OUTREACH

The commitment of public libraries to serve the public wherever that public might be has led to the development of a wide range of outreach or extension services. Outreach in this section excludes services provided by branch libraries and/or stations. To offer outreach services, librarians must evaluate the personality of their own area by assessing the educational levels, the economy, and the needs, interests, and attitudes of their community. Librarians must be aware of changes in the community's composition. For example, such factors as a change of transit routes, the closing of a hospital, an influx of apartment dwellers, an increase in the average age, or a change in the ethnic composition should be considered. The public library has long been dedicated to the concept of "services to all". The vastness or limits of your outreach will depend on your parish needs, your board's policies, and your financial situation. The following examples are possible outreach programs that one might consider.

Services to Children

Outreach to children may include special children's programming throughout the year, a library-sponsored storytelling event in a recreational area, a puppet show by the bookmobile staff at a central stop, or service to day care centers. These are all common types of outreach. With social changes occurring in our communities many libraries have latchkey programs in the afternoons and evenings, drug awareness programs, and even special programs for the abused child.

Service to Older Adults

Older adults are a growing sector of our population. Many residential areas have been designed for them such as retirement homes. This group may be less mobile or homebound and often need special delivery service, or may need special interest materials, or may desire special programming on topics such as social security or Medicare.

Services to New Readers

Many Louisiana libraries are involved in literacy programs. Providing new reader materials is the first step in assisting adults who are improving their basic skills and understanding in reading, writing, speaking, and computing as they gain new knowledge. Often the library is the agency that provides training sessions for tutors, provides space for a tutor and student to work, provides the teaching materials for the student and tutor, and even locates a tutor for the patron who needs help in learning to read. In some areas, there are well-established programs conducted by literacy action groups, or Council on Aging, or United Way, but in many areas the public library is the only agency totally involved.

Services to the Institutionalized

Service to the institutionalized includes correctional facilities for adults and children, nursing homes, hospitals, schools and residences for the mentally and physically disabled, and other special facilities. Library services, such as deposit collections and special programming, can be very meaningful to citizens who make a traumatic change in their lives to an institutional environment where there may be a loss of privacy or dignity.

Bookmobile Services

A bookmobile or a van delivery system is one means of serving special groups. Bookmobile service is an active component of Louisiana library service. A statewide interest group offers periodic bookmobile workshops featuring expert speakers and a sharing of ideas by participants. Bookmobiles reach out to people as a mobile force in an age of mobility. They provide temporary service until library facilities can be erected. They help determine the best locations for future permanent sites. They advertise the library dramatically and can enhance your public relations program. Bookmobiles do not replace and are not a substitute for a well-planned adequate branch, but bookmobiles do allow your library to serve people who might otherwise not have access to library services. Bringing books and people together by means of a vehicle is a unique service. Bookmobiles are used to serve older adults in residential areas and those who are homebound or handicapped. Bookmobiles are used to serve the institutions that were mentioned earlier if these institutions are not served by special collection deposits managed by staff or volunteers. Some schools are served by bookmobile. Often, bookmobiles serve schools that have no school library or school librarian, schools where there are no branch libraries,

and/or schools that have few books to supplement the curriculum needs of the students and faculty. With the rapid opening of many daycare centers, bookmobiles now go to these centers to provide books and programs for these very young children. Bookmobiles are also used to service many migrant children in our farming areas.

As the director, you must determine the realm of your outreach program in your own community. The question we must ask ourselves as librarians is: *Can we ignore communities where human beings wish to read, do read, and need to read?*

Sources - Outreach

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FRIENDS

Friends of public libraries are organized for a variety of reasons. While there are differences in activities, the basic purposes for organization are to support and promote institutions that are vital to the well being of society but which are largely taken for granted.

Friends bring together citizens who are acutely aware of libraries as a public good and, as such, have a committed interest in their development and use. Because they are not responsible for the library, as are trustees, the director and library staff, these citizens can provide an unbiased assessment of the library and serve objectively to enhance the library and promote its use.

In addition to promoting the resources and services of libraries for the benefit of the public and serving as a forum for the expression of the community's library needs, Friends organizations provide two main functions. They provide advocacy for libraries at the local, state and federal levels in regard to legislation and funding, and they seek to improve and extend resources and services of libraries by augmenting public funds.

Friends groups seek to increase and enrich library resources and services through gifts, endowments, and bequests and through other fundraising activities. They are not organized to assume city, parish, state, or federal obligations to finance libraries, but rather seek to supply the extras that turn adequate libraries into superior ones.

The organization of a Friends group follows a general pattern. The elected officers -- president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer -- along with a board of directors representing the library regionally, govern the business of the organization. Friends adopt a constitution with bylaws and usually acquire nonprofit corporation status.

While sharing concerns and goals, Friends and trustees have very different areas of responsibility. Trustees are legally and officially responsible for the operation of the library. Friends have no policy-making role. Trustees govern the library and keep Friends informed by providing liaison between the two entities. Friends support board decisions and coordinate their activities to library policy guidelines. Operating in an atmosphere of cooperation and respect, Friends and trustees can make their library the vital, responsive agency it should be.

The state group, Friends of Libraries of Louisiana (FOLOLA), incorporated in July 1993 as a non-profit organization patterned after the national organization, Friends of Libraries

U.S.A. (FOLUSA). FOLOLA's purposes are to encourage the formation of local groups, support state initiatives for the improvement of library services, and promote federal and state funding for libraries at appropriate and reasonable levels. FOLOLA's activities include annual educational programs for friends, trustees, and library staff; informational assistance in starting friends groups; and notice of Friends activities in [Communiqué](#).

Sources - Friends

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Young, Virginia. The Library Trustee: A Practical Guidebook. 4th ed. Chicago: American Library Association, 1988.

VOLUNTEERS IN LIBRARIES

Volunteer programs in libraries should be given consideration for two important reasons. If they are planned and administered well, they can enrich the library by freeing or enabling regular staff to reach beyond what they are normally able to do. Such programs also perform the invaluable public relations function of increasing the network of library supporters in the community.

Volunteer programs in libraries can be either a boon or a bane depending on how they are planned and administered. Whether they develop as a reaction to a crisis such as lack of funding to support adequate staffing levels or as a desire to enhance the library's ability to serve the community, there is a need to plan wisely for volunteer use.

The level of planning for volunteer programs will depend on the size of the library and the tasks to be undertaken. The first step in planning for any size library is to make sure your staff understands how volunteers can assist them, and that board and staff are in complete agreement for volunteer help. Without this agreement on the use and role of volunteers in the library, a volunteer program is doomed to failure.

Other steps important to the success of any size volunteer program are the appointment of library employees to act as the volunteers' supervisors or first line of contact, and the appointment of an individual to coordinate the volunteer program. For small programs, the director can serve as volunteer coordinator. For larger programs, the director should consider appointing an existing staff member, hiring someone, or recruiting a volunteer with administrative experience to serve in this position.

Steps in planning volunteer programs include the following:

1. Enlisting full board and staff cooperation,
2. Reviewing with board and staff all library activities to see if a volunteer work program would be of help to the library in meeting goals and objectives,
3. Assessing activities and specific tasks to see where volunteer assistance could most properly be utilized,
4. Appointing a volunteer coordinator,
5. Preparing job descriptions for tasks appropriate for volunteers,
6. Establishing first line supervisors for each volunteer,
7. Establishing evaluation measures for continual feedback on volunteer job performance,

8. Preparing policy and procedure guidelines for volunteers,
9. Developing orientation and training programs, and
10. Planning formal recognition programs.

While recruiting volunteers can be difficult, retaining them is often a greater problem. Recruitment and retention of serious, capable and dependable volunteers are facilitated by a planned business approach to volunteer work. It indicates to the volunteer the library takes its responsibilities seriously and has respect for the volunteer's time, talents and motivation.

Most volunteers enter the library with no idea of library operations. Volunteers appreciate knowing exactly what is expected of them and what they are to accomplish. They appreciate training before embarking on their assignments and supervision all along the way. They need an introduction to the library including the physical facility (parking, where to hang their hats, restrooms, break rooms, telephone use, etc.) and library policies and procedures (confidentiality of records, patron interaction, staff relations, promptness, absences, dependability, hours, holidays, time sheets, liability, benefits, expense reimbursements, tax deductible expenses, etc.)

Volunteers can be recruited from library users, acquaintances, or community agencies. An application form to take information from interested individuals and an interview with the director or volunteer coordinator will indicate a business approach, ascertain skills and interest of the individual, and help in placement. Entering a contractual agreement with the volunteer utilizing a form, which spells out volunteer responsibilities and library responsibilities, will also formalize the process and indicate to volunteers the importance of their work.

To avoid burnout, volunteers should be scheduled for no more than three hours one day a week. Minimum commitment should be for six weeks.

Keep volunteers to a minimum to avoid staff conflict and the idea that libraries can be run on a part time basis rather than with regular paid professional and skilled workers. When a volunteer has finished an assignment, end the volunteer cycle with the provision that the volunteer may be recalled for another assignment. Recall only the best.

Thank volunteers both personally and through formal recognition programs. Volunteers need to feel satisfied with and appreciated for their contributions. A volunteer who experiences a positive working relationship with the library and feels appreciated will

speak highly of the library in the community.

Activities appropriate for volunteers include the following:

1. Care of the collection including sorting, mending, shelving and straightening books,
2. Working with children's programming including storytelling,
3. Assisting in branches,
4. Helping with outreach programs,
5. Preparing displays and exhibits,
6. Assisting with the automation process inputting files into the computer and bar coding,
7. Compiling reading lists,
8. Working with genealogists,
9. Helping with inventory,
10. Providing hospitality and decorations for special occasions such as open houses, end of summer reading program parties, etc.,
11. Working as a literacy tutor,
12. Providing help in maintaining the vertical, picture and pamphlet files, and
13. Assisting with surveys.

Sources - Volunteers

- Allerton Park Institute. Organizing the Library's Support: Donors, Volunteers, Friends. Urbana-Champaign: Urbana-Champaign Public Library, 1988.
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TAX ELECTIONS

The State Constitution, Article VI, Section 32, authorizes a special tax for the support of a public library. It reads:

"For the purpose of acquiring, constructing, improving, maintaining, or operating any work of public improvement, a political subdivision may levy special taxes when authorized by a majority of the electors in the political subdivision who vote thereon in an election held for that purpose."

The Election Code (L.R.S. 18:402 et seq.) adopted by the legislature pursuant to the state constitution establishes a uniform procedure for the conduct of bond and tax elections.

There are many steps that must be followed in order to begin working toward a tax election.

The following things must be done - the responsibility for which may vary from parish to parish. One is advised to check with the parish governing authority to ascertain which steps are the library's responsibility. The first step, of course, is for the library board, with the help of the administration and staff, to make the decision that it is time to call a tax election. Consideration should be given to the amount of money necessary for the library's operation and the number of years that the tax should run. Traditionally, duration of library taxes is between five and ten years. The library must share the cost of the election with others on the ballot. The board should work with a bonding attorney to write: 1) the resolution ordering and calling for the tax or bond election, and 2) the proposition as it will appear on the ballot.

The actual wording of the proposition as it is submitted to the voters is very important and should be carefully studied. It is very important that the heading indicate that the proposition is for the library so that voters will not confuse it with the other propositions on the ballot, if any. For example, the heading should read "LIBRARY TAX PROPOSITION" rather than merely stating "PARISHWIDE TAX PROPOSITION". Also, be sure that the purpose of the tax is spelled out by noting that the tax is for the "support, maintenance, operation, and upkeep" and/or for the "construction and improvements" of the parish library system.

Remember, how the proposition is worded will legally limit the use of the tax money. Attorney General Opinion 98-361 states that the proceeds of an ad valorem tax levied for the purpose of acquiring, constructing, and improving a public library and its branches could not be used for the purchase of equipment and books for use by the library.

Sample Tax Proposition

PARISHWIDE LIBRARY TAX PROPOSITION

**SUMMARY: 10 YEAR 5.98 MILLS PROPERTY TAX
CONTINUATION FOR THE SUPPORT, MAINTENANCE, OPERATION
AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE XYZ PARISH LIBRARY AND ITS
BRANCHES.**

Shall the Parish of XYZ, State of Louisiana (the "Parish"), be authorized to continue to levy a special tax of five and ninety-eight hundredths (5.98) mills on all property subject to taxation within the Parish, for a period of ten (10) years beginning with the year 1999 and ending with the year 2008, for the purpose of the support, maintenance, operation and improvement of the XYZ Parish Library and its branches?

After the resolution and proposition are written, the Board officially approves the written resolution and sees that it is placed on the parish Police Jury or governing authority's agenda for discussion and approval. Next, the governing authority officially approves the resolution, and the governing authority generates a resolution approving of the election.

A written notice of the election (certified copy of the resolution of approval) is next sent to the Secretary of State, State Bond Commission, Commissioner of Elections, and each Clerk of Court and Registrar of Voters in the area affected by the election at least forty-five days prior to the election. A copy of the proposition as it is to appear on the ballot must also accompany the election notice. The purpose of this notification is in order that each office may prepare for the election and perform those functions required of them by law. Along with the certified resolution, application is formally made to the State Bond commission for consent and authority to hold the election and, should the proposition pass, to levy and collect the special tax or finance the bond as provided in the proposition. Notice to the State Bond Commission should be submitted several weeks in advance of the forty-five day deadline for the Secretary of State's office. A schedule of these deadlines, State Bond Commission meetings, and regular election dates is available at <http://www.treasury.state.la.us/sbc/dedln-98.htm> or by contacting the State Bond Commission at (225) 342-0040.

Public notice of the election shall be given and shall embrace substantially all matters

required to be set forth in the resolution ordering the election. It also shall list all designated polling places and that the governing authority of the political subdivision ordering the election will in open session, at hour and place named, proceed to canvass the returns and declare the results of the election. The notice shall be published once a week for four consecutive weeks in the official journal of the political subdivision. Not less than forty-five days nor more than ninety days may intervene between the date of the first publication and the election.

Bond and tax elections may be held only on certain specific days during the year. Based on the election code (L.R.S. 18:402 et seq.), the State Bond Commission has determined the dates for elections through 2001 to be as follows:

Elections	1999	2000	2001
Propositions Only	Jan 16	Jan 15	Jan 20
Primary	Mar 27	Mar 14 (presidential preference primary)	Apr 7
General	May 1	Apr 15	May 5
Propositions Only	Jul 17	Jul 15	Jul 21
Primary	Oct 23 (gubernatorial primary)	Oct 7	Oct 20
General	Nov 20 (gubernatorial general)	Nov 7 (congressional/presidential election)	Nov 17
Congressional Run-off/Tie	none	Dec 9	none

Information on future dates can be obtained by contacting the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office in Baton Rouge at (225) 342-4970 or online at <http://www.sec.state.la.us.elect-3.htm>.

After the election, the official results are canvassed and the Proces-Verbal giving the results is published once in the official journal.

After your tax has passed, check to make certain that adjustment in revenue sharing funds are made if needed. The mechanics of insuring eligibility for revenue sharing funds are simple - contact your legislator (either representative or senator) and request that new

millages be included in the next revenue sharing bill. For further information on this matter contact your State Library consultant and review the articles on [State Revenue Sharing](#) in this handbook.

What if your tax doesn't succeed?

First, you cry. Then take several deep breaths! You will have support from your colleagues, library supporters in your community, and the news media. The best advice, information, support, and sympathy come from colleagues who have had failed tax elections and from Library Development personnel at the State Library.

Library taxes have failed for a variety of reasons, including general voter anti-tax sentiment, low voter turnout with the anti-tax faction voting heavily, and being on the ballot with unpopular propositions. In 1995, voters approved an amendment to the Louisiana Constitution (Article 6, Section 30 B) providing that the submission of a local tax proposition to the electorate may occur no more often than once within a six-month period except in the case of an emergency.

You **will** go back to the voters again – older, wiser, and with a more successful result!

Tax or Bond Campaign - Checklist for Placing Item on Ballot

This checklist is a general guideline for placing a tax or bond proposition on the ballot. Check with the appropriate local, parish, and state officials for answers to specific questions and to clarify the duties and responsibilities of the Library Director, Library Board, Parish Police Jury or Parish Council, and attorney in your parish.

- _____ Library Board determines it is time to call an election for a tax or bond issue.
- _____ Library Board determines amount to seek and duration of tax.
- _____ Library Board chooses a date for the election.
- _____ Library Board works with an attorney to produce the following:
 - _____ Resolution ordering and calling for the tax or bond, which must
 - _____ Include purpose for which election is being called
 - _____ Include tax rate or bond amount
 - _____ Include number of years the tax or bond will run
 - _____ For a tax, includes the method of taxation (sales, ad valorem)
 - _____ For a bond, includes the interest rate and source of revenues pledged to retire the bond
 - _____ Include the text of the proposition
 - _____ Proposition to appear on the ballot, which must
 - _____ Not exceed 400 words in length
 - _____ Include a concise summary of purpose in capital letters, placed at the statement's beginning
 - _____ State the purpose of the tax or bond
 - _____ State the tax rate or bond amount
 - _____ State the number of years the tax or bond will run
 - _____ State the year the tax or bond will begin and the year it will end
 - _____ For a tax, state the method of taxation (sales, ad valorem)
 - _____ For a bond, state the interest rate and source of revenues pledged to retire the bond
- _____ Library Board approves the written resolution and proposition.
- _____ Resolution and Proposition are placed on Parish Police Jury or Parish Council agenda for discussion and approval.
- _____ Police Jury or Parish Council approves
 - _____ Resolution
 - _____ Proposition
- _____ Prepare written notice of the election, which contains the following
 - _____ All information required to be set forth in the resolution ordering the election

- _____List of all precincts where the proposition will be voted
- _____Statement that the proposition is to voted parish-wide by all registered voters,
- OR
- _____An indication for each precinct as to whether all registered voters in that precinct will be eligible to vote on the proposition
- _____Statement that the governing authority calling the election will, in open session, at the hour and place named, proceed to canvass the returns and declare the result of the election.
- _____Prepare and publish public notice of the election
 - _____Published once a week for four consecutive weeks in the official journal of the political subdivision or, if there is none, then in a newspaper of general circulation in the parish or in and adjoining parish
 - _____Not less than 45 days nor more than 90 days shall intervene between the date of the first publication and the date of the election
- _____Prepare and submit written notice of the election to the following governmental units in order that each office may prepare for the election and perform those functions connected with same as required of them by law
 - _____Certified copies of the resolution and the proposition must be submitted to
 - _____Secretary of State
 - _____Commissioner of Elections
 - _____Clerk of Court - for each area affected by the election
 - _____Registrar of Voters - for each area affected by the election
 - _____Transmittal of notice must be on or before the 45th day prior to the election
- _____Make formal application to the State Bond Commission, which includes
 - _____Certified copies of the resolution and the proposition
 - _____Request for consent and authority to hold the election and,
 - _____For a tax, request to secure the authority to levy and collect the tax as provided in the proposition, should the proposition pass
 - _____For a bond, request to secure the authority to finance the bond as provided in the proposition, should the proposition pass

Note: in some parishes, an attorney may be hired to perform the steps on this checklist once the tax issue is decided by the Library Board and Parish Police Jury or Parish Council. It is critical that the Library Director work with this attorney to ensure that the wording of the proposition and resolution is correct and that all steps are completed in a timely fashion. This will help avoid errors or misunderstandings that could lead to a defeat of the tax or bond proposition on Election Day.

Tax Elections - Planning a Campaign

The State Constitution, Article XI, Section 4 reads:

"No public funds shall be used to urge any elector to vote for or against any candidate or proposition, or be appropriated to a candidate or political organization. This provision shall not prohibit the use of public funds for dissemination of factual information relative to a proposition appearing on an election ballot."

This means that library funds may not be used to promote an affirmative vote on a library tax proposition. Library funds may be used to explain and provide information relative to the proposition, to state what would happen if the tax passes or if it fails, but not to print literature of any type saying, "Vote Yes" or "Vote for the library tax". This prohibition also extends to the use of library time by the librarian and staff to promote a favorable vote and the use of library equipment to produce promotional materials.

Suggestions for planning a campaign:

1. Contact the Library Development staff of the State Library. They can help you in planning your campaign, supply you with sample publicity pieces and update you on recent changes in the election law.
2. Meet with library staff members and explain the goals and plans for the campaign.
3. Get the Friends of the Library group involved to help promote tax election and assist in conducting a campaign. If no group exists, consider starting one.
4. Prepare a fact sheet for general distribution.
5. Prepare informational bookmarks, etc. on the tax election for distribution to patrons.
6. Prepare posters for display in stores, banks, etc.
7. Prepare lists of organizations and churches throughout the parish with meeting time and name, address, and telephone number of contact person for each.
8. Organize a speakers' bureau made up of board members and library friends. Prepare a library fact sheet to assist speakers.
9. Write letters to organizations offering speakers on the library and its services; ask for resolutions endorsing the library tax.
10. Write similar letters to parish and city agencies, such as the school board and city councils

11. Write letters to churches asking their support for the election by mentioning it in their services and publicizing it in their church bulletins on the Sunday before the election.
12. Visit the newspapers and radio and TV stations to ask their help in promoting the tax election by using:
 - a. Weekly stories on library service
 - b. Specific stories on the various goals of the campaign
 - c. Editorials
 - d. Letters to the editor from a variety of interested citizens
 - e. Resolutions
 - f. Radio, TV, and press interviews with board members, library staff, and interested citizens
 - g. Spot announcements on library services and tax campaign
 - h. Advertisements paid for by business, industry, or individuals (not the library)
13. Organize a parish-wide telephone committee to get the vote out on Election Day. Calls should be made both in advance of and on Election Day.
14. Organize a transportation committee to offer rides to the polls.
15. Schedule special events like a balloon launch or poster contest to attract attention to the library and its services.