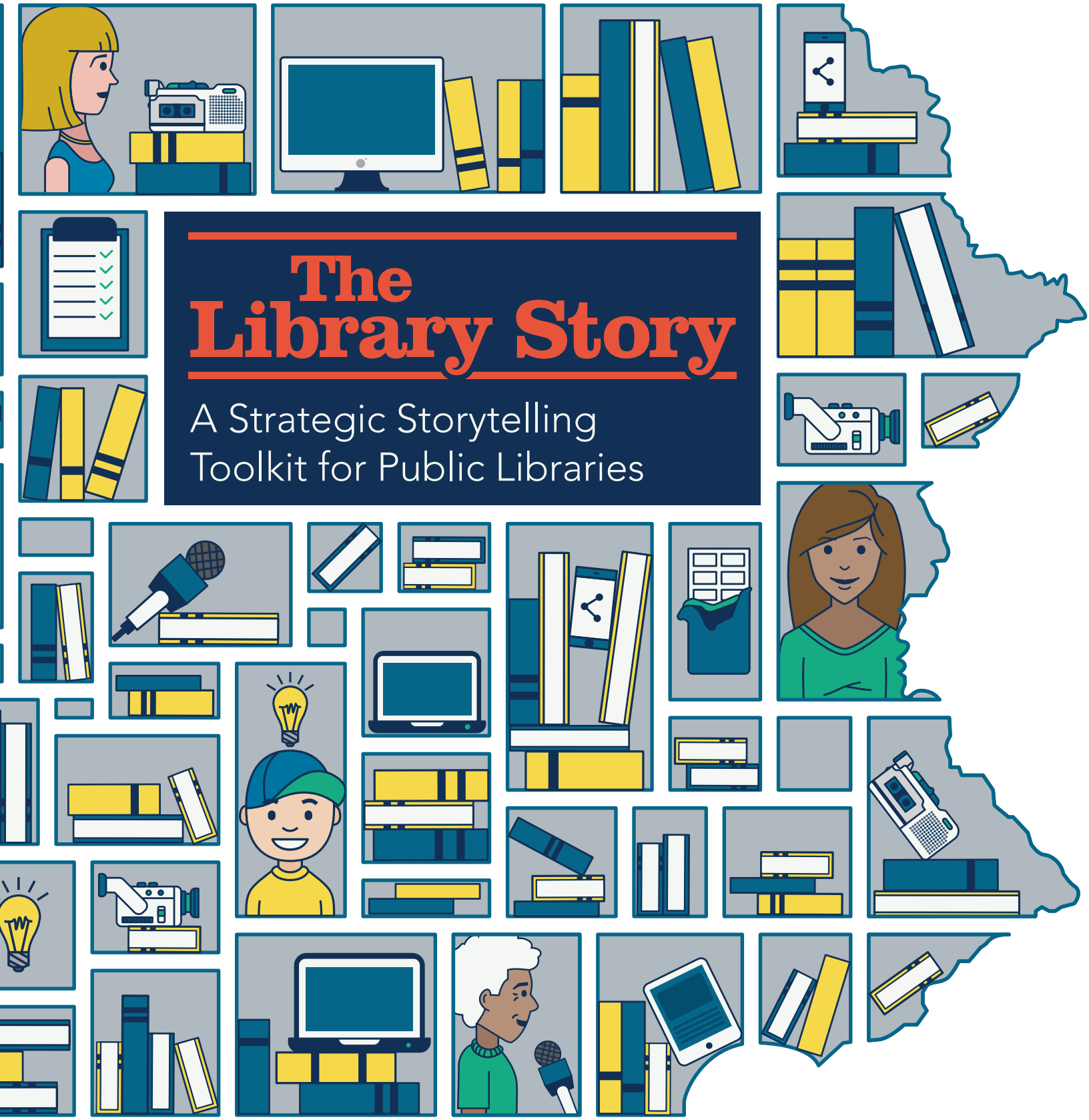
The Library Story

A Strategic Storytelling Toolkit for Public Libraries



Enliven Your Library's Story!

How to Use this Toolkit

The Library Story is designed to help you use storytelling to more effectively communicate with your community. Inside, you'll find a framework to help you frame your story and bring it to life. You'll also find activities, templates and tips that will spark storytelling ideas and help you communicate both internally and externally. This toolkit is designed for libraries to enhance their capacity to provide 21st century resources, services and programs to their communities.

You may want to dive right in and read this toolkit from cover to cover, using each section as a stepping-stone along the path to your bigger story. Or you might zero in on an individual section that helps you identify a specific piece of your story. Either way, you will walk away with new strategies for sharing your library's story and engaging the people who matter most. *See the Storytelling Cheat Sheet on page 37 for helpful questions in navigating this toolkit.*

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The Backstory

This toolkit was created thanks to the vision and leadership of the State Library of Pennsylvania, and Altoona Area Public Library, in partnership with Get Storied, a learning company devoted to transformational storytelling. Over the past years, Get Storied has worked with Pennsylvania and several other states on the "future of libraries" story.

Much gratitude to nearly 200 librarians, directors and stakeholders across Pennsylvania who participated in the surveys, interviews and research that led to this work. Our appreciation goes to Stacey Aldrich, Deputy Secretary of Education and Commissioner for Libraries, and Jennifer Knisely, Executive Director, Altoona Area Public Library for leading this effort, along with those who partnered in the interviews: Cathi Alloway, Mary Frances Cooper, Brian Dawson, Mary Garm, Lewis Maurer and Cynthia Richey.

The Get Storied team who contributed to the development of this toolkit includes: Michael Margolis, Kristina Drury, Elaine Gast Fawcett, Kim Brittingham, and Erick Meléndez (Designer).

Introduction

Why Storytelling Matters

We all know libraries are in the midst of dramatic change. Technology has transformed how we find and use books, how we gather information, and how we learn. E-books, Google and Amazon have shifted the landscape. Libraries the world over are evolving the stories they share and how they share them.

Librarians understand the power of storytelling more than most. Yet, even when in the business of lending books and stories, it's easy to forget the power of your own story—why you love working for the library, what your library has achieved, and what you've learned along the way. It's stories like this that help the public understand and connect with your library. It also helps staff connect with one another and their larger purpose at the library.

It's up to you to use storytelling to communicate more effectively with your colleagues and your community.

You have a powerful story to tell. Yes, you, the librarian who is offering new programs and services, reimagining your library's physical space, or shifting the way you reach patrons. The key to your library's success is in how you tell this story. How can you describe its shift in clear and inspiring terms?

> ***A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert.***
>
> *– Andrew Carnegie*

It all starts with your story.

The world is indeed changing, yet the need, role, and value of storytelling for libraries remain steadfast and strong. This toolkit will bolster the storytelling skills you already have and, more importantly, build your confidence and enthusiasm for sharing the stories of your library and its impact.

Note: *Each section of this toolkit is standalone tool—meaning, you can choose to work on building one skill at a time. You can also work through the toolkit as a whole.*

Top 10 Ways You Can Use This Storytelling Toolkit

1. **Position yourself as a guide in an overwhelming landscape of information**
2. **Develop and leverage key stories for different groups**
3. **Describe your library's programs and services in a more compelling way**
4. **Reinforce your credibility and relationship with patrons**
5. **Demonstrate to non-library users that the library has something for them**
6. **Communicate with your board on how your library is changing and what it needs**
7. **Build team energy and cohesion among your staff**
8. **Educate and interact with community members**
9. **Find and sustain appropriate collaborative partnerships**
10. **Attract and respond to new opportunities**

[1]Library Services in the Digital Age, Pew Research Center, January 2013: http://libraries.pewinternet.org

Existing Opportunities

This toolkit is based on months of research, surveys and interviews with nearly 200 librarians and directors across Pennsylvania State Libraries. In part, the research was used to uncover the challenges, issues and opportunities librarians encounter on a regular basis.

Here's what Pennsylvania Library Leaders said were the biggest areas of change, challenge and opportunity:

Defining the library in the 21st century

When it comes to communicating value in this fast-paced digital age, libraries everywhere want to get it right. The opportunity is in reminding people that, yes, our world gets bigger every day and libraries are here to help you explore that bigger world.

Keeping up with technology

Libraries are struggling to provide enough of the latest technology to meet user demands. Some librarians feel "left behind," simply because they don't have the support or training they need to stay up-to-date.

However, librarians have an opportunity to position their library as the place where people come to learn and "try out" new technology.

Engaging the right partners

Some librarians feel they take on the bulk of the work when it comes to partnerships. The first step? Learn to communicate your needs and expectations with potential partners from the outset, and build in accountability measures that keep everyone equally on task.

Reaching new audiences

Most libraries are lean operations that sometimes keep librarians tethered to circulation desks out of necessity. Yet finding true believers means stepping away from the buildings you love and sharing programs and services out in the community.

> ***"More than just books and banks of computers, libraries are still places where individuals gather to explore, interact, and imagine.***
>
> *– David Morris, The Public Library Manifesto, Yes! Magazine, May 6, 2011*

Learning the needs of the community

Is your library serving the needs of a changing community? The only way to know for sure is to take the pulse of the population. By collecting data and stories, librarians are better able to touch and elevate all segments of their community.

Maximizing the library's website

Does your library's website have untapped potential? Is it confusing to navigate? It's tough to organize information on your websites neatly and succinctly. Identifying your library's key storylines can guide you in refining your website's user experience and maximize social media.

There's hope for libraries, and plenty of it. In order to close the gap between libraries and all that's possible, you must leverage your existing stories and communicate them throughout the community. There's no better time to tell your story—and the clearer you are about your library story, the more others will understand and want to engage with you.

The Changing Story of Libraries

Libraries are at a turning point when it comes to their programs and services. Every library is living a New Story as it adapts to changing technology, new content, an evolving culture, and programs and services that respond to community needs. Part of the challenge is communicating that New Story to the community, not to mention your staff.

- **How do you get others to see what you see?**
- **How have you changed, evolved or innovated?**
- **How do you want to be perceived by others?**

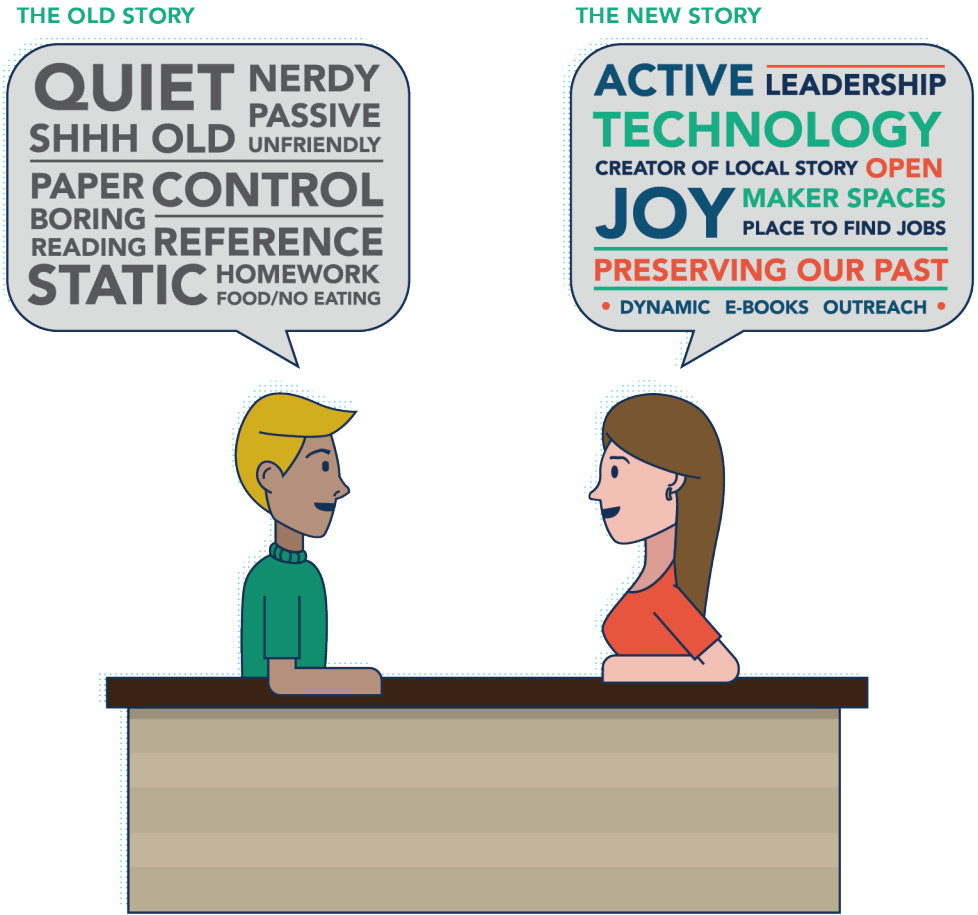
Crystallizing all that change in just a few words can be daunting. On the following page, you'll find a way to capture, in clear terms, the Old Story and New Story of libraries. This exercise will help you move your thinking forward to your New Story, while also building a bridge between old and new.

"In a world that's overloaded with information, libraries help people find their way through the wilderness.

You can do this exercise on your own or with a group. If you're facilitating this exercise in a group setting, give everyone two stacks of sticky notes, each a different color. You'll use one color for "Old Story" and the other color for "New Story."

Ask participants to write one word or phrase on each note, keeping in mind your Old/New color scheme. When complete, post the notes on a wall, grouping similar storylines and noting the differences.

This exercise—and this entire toolkit, really—is an opportunity for you to reimagine your story. Be open to jumping in and playing along, and you'll find it will inspire new ways to express your storytelling future.



Old Story/ New Story

Purpose
- Look at the story of libraries in the past, and your library's story today
- Bridge the differences between the Old Story and the New Story
- Move your thinking forward on the New Story you want to tell

1 Reflect

Think about the words or concepts that symbolize the Old Story of libraries. Take a few minutes to list as many as possible. Don't limit yourself to the space on this page; use additional paper as needed.

Next, list words or concepts that are part of the New Story—again, as many as you can think of.

2 Compare

Looking at your list, reflect or discuss the following:
- What has stayed the same between the Old Story and New Story?
- What's different? What about the New Story contradicts the Old Story?
- What excites you about the New Story? What do you want to focus on?

3 Go Deeper

Take it a step further by reflecting or discussing these questions:
- Where are our stories of growth?
- Where are our stereotypes, assumptions or blind spots?
- What of the Old Story do we want to keep? What are we ready to let go?
- What part of the New Story is positive? Challenging? Innovative?

4 Next Steps

Complete the following statements (in your own words):
- Where we have come from still matters because…
- The parts of our Old Story that we want to carry forward include…
- We see great potential in moving toward…

Old Story	New Story
Quiet	Loud
Books	E-Books
Repository	Creator

Strategic Storytelling

Now that you've thought about your vision for the New Story, consider what's most important to your library at this time:

- **Getting more people in the door?**
- **Describing a new event or program?**
- **Helping library staff build a common story?**
- **Engaging more partners and collaborators?**
- **Developing new offerings in response to community needs?**
- **All of the above?**

Strategic storytelling involves first getting clear on why you want to tell your story, and then deciding how to do it to achieve the best results. It means taking a look at your internal and local assets, examining your community and its needs, and then making choices about how you will use storytelling to facilitate and enable the change you want to see.

Does the story you're telling match the future you want to create?

"Always know why you're telling the story.

Ask yourself:
Take a few moments to answer the questions below. Use additional paper if needed. Get specific.

1. Why do you need to share your library's story at this moment in time?

2. What are you trying to achieve, and by when?

3. Because you interact daily with patrons from all stages and walks of life, what do you notice are the changing needs of your community? How do you imagine your library can best support these needs? *(If you aren't sure of your community's needs, see Profiling Your Community on page 20.)*

4. Given your goals and the community's needs, what is the most important story you need to share, and why? (Note: This is a starting place. You can revisit your story as you work through this toolkit.)

Your Story Framework

Your Strategic Library Story

This toolkit will help you consider the following elements of your story:

M

Motivations: Share your personal story, your organizational story - *see page 10 and 12*
Being on the receiving end of so much messaging can make people a pretty cynical bunch. Get clear on your motivations, and you'll gain more trust and credibility with others.

A

Audience: Tailor your story - *see page 14*
Your audience is more than your patrons—it's also the staff and community members who influence and affect your future. Show them you understand their world.

S

Stakes: Show what matters now and why - *see page 18*
Why now? Reflect the local community story, history, and assets. Describe what's changing. Be clear about what's at stake if people don't respond to the changes.

T

Truth: Choose and elevate a trendline - *see page 22*
This toolkit contains six strategic trendlines to choose from. Decide which you want to elevate and work with, or come up with your own. Consider how your chosen trendline elevates your community.

E

Emotion: Draw people in with the deeper emotional content - *see page 26*
Emotional content is what brings your story to life. You can't convince people to think differently but if you make them feel something, you'll have their attention. Inspire people to feel good.

R

Relevance: Make your audience the hero of the story - *see page 30*
Your audience wants to be more than just a spectator. Give them a role to play in advancing your story forward.

Y

Yes!: Give people a reason to celebrate with you - *see page 36*
Do they belong in your story? That's their question. They'll say yes more when your library story is one of possibility and aspiration.

Inside Stories

Your Personal Story

When telling your library's story, it can be easy to forget about your own story.

Your personal story is the place to start when talking with anyone about your library. You probably don't think the story is about you. Yet, your authenticity and credibility is always on the line as a storyteller.

Share your passion and motivations—where you come from, why you do what you do, and what brought you to the world of libraries.

Ask yourself:
Take a few moments to answer the questions below. Use additional paper if needed.

1. What inspired me to work in the world of libraries?

2. What do I care about? What concerns me most?

3. Why is this so personal for me? Allow yourself to be vulnerable.

4. Who in my life influenced me to care so much about these issues?

5. What am I still the most curious about? What's the riddle I'm trying to solve?

Jumpstart Your Story

Adapted from the works of Seth Kahan, Paul Costello and the Golden Fleece Community of Practice

Purpose

- Discover the invisible lines of connection between people
- Learn about choices and consequences in storytelling—where you start your story, what you include and don't include, and how framing the story can make all the difference
- Learn how to get to what matters more quickly
- Experience feeling witnessed and heard

Your 90-Second Story

Here's an exercise that will allow you and your staff to experience yourselves as storytellers. It's also a way to recognize some of the common storylines in the room. It's interactive, builds energy, facilitates networking, and gives people an immediate experience of their natural storytelling abilities.

Total Time: 45 minutes

What You Need: A timer or watch

In a group, break up into pairs. Ask partners to sit facing each other with attentive, open and receptive body language.

1. **Give partners a storytelling prompt**—one that gives them energy and is relevant to the topic at hand. Example: "Tell the story of why you work in the library world" or "What was it like the first time you entered a library?"

2. **Each partner will have 90 seconds to share their story.** While Partner A is talking, Partner B will focus on silently listening and absorbing the story by taking notes. (Facilitator's note: call a 30-second warning when time is almost up.)

3. **At the end of a timed 90 seconds,** Partner A will stop (even if in mid-sentence) and everyone will pause. Allow for a few seconds of silence to fill the room, and allow the stories to settle. Partners take a breath, switch roles. Start again. Partner B will have 90 seconds to share a story.

4. **Give partners one minute to debrief each story** and share what they heard. Listeners will share where they felt the most energy, and the moments in the story where they wanted to know more. Their job is not to correct or fix their partner's story. The partner should only give reflection. Complete both debriefs.

5. **Ask people to stand up, thank their partner for the story they just shared, and find a new partner** (as time allows). Repeat the same exercise, asking new partners to tell the same story—this time, in 60 seconds (with a 20-second warning). At the end of 60 seconds, pause, take a breath, and switch partners again. Repeat the exercise.

6. **After one or two rounds, bring the whole group back together** for debriefing and reflection.
Ask questions such as:
   - What was the experience like for you?
   - What did you learn about storytelling through this exercise?
   - If you did two rounds, was the second round easier or harder?
   - How many of you were surprised by what your partner pointed out?
   - Did you share any surprising, unexpected connections with your partner?

Next Steps:
You or your staff can use the above exercise to develop or refine your personal story as it relates to the library. Record your personal stories and compare them. Where are the similarities?

Inside Stories

Your Organizational Story Matters Too

What's the collective story you are telling about your library? In order to find a new voice or message, and change how your library is perceived in your community, you've got to make sure everyone inside your organization is aligned around the same story.

If your staff isn't clear on a shared common story of the future—about what excites and inspires you forward—how can anyone else be excited? Get clear about any competing storylines within your own library walls, and work to resolve them.

A shared organizational story is what inspires your library's future into being. It unifies and connects your staff to one another. It describes the common desire you're all working toward, and the "possibility story" for what's to come.

You don't have to be a big library with lots of money to make a difference in your community.

– Mary Garm, Administrator, Lackawanna County Library System

You don't have to have all the answers.

If you feel like you're just at the beginning of a story, start with the questions. Questions like: How is technology changing our lives? What are the new ways people want and need to approach learning? How do you find job opportunities in a changing labor market? Invite the staff and community to go on a journey of inquiry with you. Be the voice of those questions—provide a forum to hold the conversation.

Here are some steps toward discovering your organizational story.

1. What is it about your history that still holds relevance? Get clear on your organizational motivations and intentions. Some libraries are big into being local historians, while others are a technology guide for local citizens. Look at your roots and history. What has really mattered to your library over time? How can you stay true to that, but reinterpret it in the context of today?

2. What are the stories your staff share in common? Find out the personal stories and motivations of your staff, and what connects you all together. If you don't know, ask them. As you're listening to the stories, notice any resentments in staff stories ("we don't have enough money," or "no one cares about books anymore"). These kinds of stories reinforce resistance to change. Acknowledge the emotions, and help staff members refocus on a possibility story.

3. What are you passionate about? Remind your staff about the exciting time you're in. People are curious about the world, and the library has always fanned the flame of that curiosity. Give staff a reason to deepen their excitement about what is possible through a library today, and the new opportunities you have to fulfill your mission. (*See Possibility Story on page 29.*)

Library Audiences

Your community members are your audience. In business terms, they are the customers that you serve, albeit in many different ways. The exercise below will help you think through all your potential library audiences—those that have a specific interest or influence on your library.

Your customers; the people and organizations you directly serve

Primary Audiences

Who are your primary audiences under each category below? Be as specific as possible.

- Patrons
- Board of directors
- Friends of the Library
- Education partners
- Board and Internal Staff

People who have an influence on your library and work; collaborators and partners

Additional Audiences

Outside of those audiences you directly serve, which types of people or organizations are important to your library? Who do you want or need to be in relationship with?

- Examples: Other libraries, potential partners (be specific)

Audience

How to Tailor Your Story for Different Audiences

Not everyone hears the same story. This is because different people have different needs, interests and agendas.

In order to reach your community members and be in a relationship with them, it helps to customize your story to each group. Segment your audience and share a story that meets them where they are. You may be in just one library, but you'll share more than one story (in fact, many more).

Consider this: Who do you need to share your story with in order to meet your goals? With whom do you need or want to be in a relationship?

Start by choosing one specific audience type. Tell the story in a way that allows your audience to find themselves in your story. The more you design a story reflecting the true needs and interests of your audience, the better your message will be received.

How to Understand Your Audience: Exercise

A good story goes from generics to specifics. So when it comes to your audience, you really want to zero in on who they are and how they see the world. Choose one specific audience member to focus on. (See the list of stakeholders on the previous page.) Take a few moments to answer the questions below. Use additional paper if needed.

For this exercise, focus on a **single** individual who represents your stakeholder audience.

What's their name (make one up if you want)?

What do you know about their life?

Age _____

Male/Female _____

Profession _____

Education _____

What is their interest, connection, or personal relationship to the library?

What do you offer that is relevant to them? What challenges do you solve for them?

What reason do they have for caring about the library? (Find one…it's always there!)

Storytelling Support

Patrons

Patrons are your true believers–your biggest fans! They're the ones who show up, participate regularly, and sing your praises. What do they need, now more than ever? And how does your library meet that need?

Starting Points: Patrons

• **Many people are struggling and feeling overwhelmed in their lives.** While the digital age is empowering some, most people admit to feeling stressed and overwhelmed. It's critical for librarians to communicate their role as navigators, helping patrons find their way.
• **We all need a safe space to orient ourselves.** The library is that safe space. It's a sigh of relief for executives who need a break from the office. A place of comfort and connection for immigrants. And a guiding hand to bewildered job-seekers. Libraries provide hope in times of transition.
• **Libraries are no longer just about the delivery of information.** People have Google and Amazon for that. Librarians have a bigger story. You help people find what they're looking for, and then discern what to trust and believe.
• **Add your own.** What is the number one problem you solve for your patrons today?

Board members

Your board members influence what happens at your library. Many are involved because they believe in the value of libraries, yet they don't always understand the day-to-day realities. Pennsylvania librarians said they communicated with their boards of directors on a regular basis. However, some expressed concern that their board members at times made big decisions without realizing how they affect daily operations.

By communicating clearly and effectively with your board, you can help them make the best choices for their library, and inspire them to share stories about the library with their community.

Starting Points: Board Members

• **Share staff, operations and patron stories with your board** so they can be more intimately connected to the impact you make and the real needs on the ground. Think of stories as a way to educate your board.
• **Share simple, top-line stories and key messages** that they can promote in the community. Encourage them to develop a personal relationship to these stories, reminding them why they care so much about the library.
• **Give board members tips** on sharing what the library means to them personally *(see Your Personal Story on page 10 for sample questions).*
• **Add your own.** What key messages can you share with board members so they can better tell the story of their library?

Potential Partners

In the recent survey of Pennsylvania libraries, many said they know opportunities for partnership are out there, yet it takes valuable staff time to find them. When writing a proposal or considering various partnerships, consider this: What is it about your library's story that will stand out?

Starting Points: Potential Partners

• **Remind potential partners** that you are a social laboratory—one that gathers together a cross-section of your local community. You have a captive audience within your library walls. Partners need to know that. What would they say to this audience if they could? Help them imagine the possibilities.
• **Partners are people too.** Just like anyone else, they're looking for emotional connection—that spark that ignites, "Yes! I want to know more!" Share your vision for transforming your community—ideally something that aligns with their mission and priorities.
• **Use data to support and legitimize the scale or reach of your impact.** Human-interest stories and data go hand-in-hand. You need both for a compelling proposal. *(See Balancing Data with Human-Interest Stories, page 30.)*
• **Don't forget the power of pictures.** Photographs and imagery can sell your story. Add them to your proposals when possible.
• **Add your own.** What do your partners need to know about your library's impact and potential?

Non-Library Patrons

Chances are, non-library users don't think about libraries. You have an opportunity to expand their view, change how they perceive the library, and get them to recognize that the library has something of specific value to offer them.

Starting Points: Non-Library Patrons

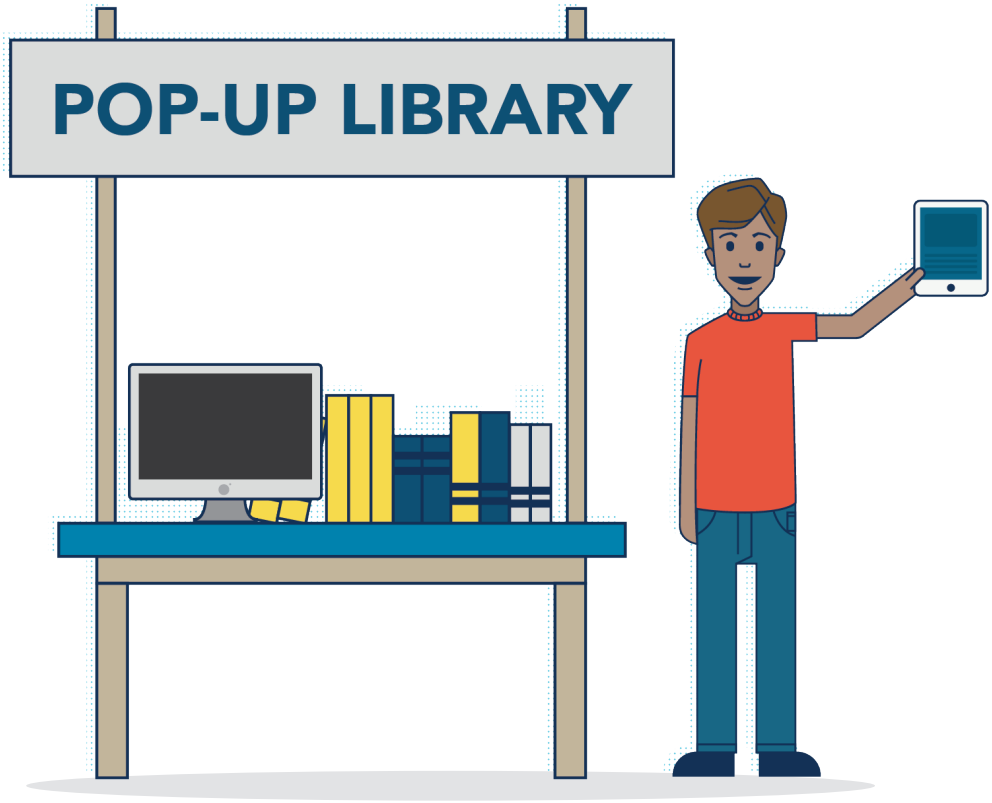
• **Something for everyone.** Libraries are more than books, moms and babies. Consider each person individually and speak directly to their needs and what you can offer them.
• **The "people's university."** With higher education costs on the rise, libraries provide free access to information and opportunities at all stages of life and learning.
• **Free access to the arts.** Not everyone can afford to attend the theater, ballet or concerts. Public library events (including performances, author visits and art displays) are often free of charge, enabling people of all income levels to attend.
• **Create your own content.** Patrons aren't just information consumers; they're information creators. Many libraries teach people how to edit in Wikipedia, set up blogs or podcasts, create their own zines, record in private music rooms, and take art and writing classes.
• **Add your own.** Where is there untapped potential for engaging new library users in your community? What message will get them in the door?

How do you find and support non-library users?

If patrons aren't coming to you, you have to go to them. That means getting outside those library walls and talking with the community. That may be easier said than done—especially for understaffed libraries with limited time and resources. Besides, it's not like people are walking around wearing "non-library user" signs around their necks. Here are some ideas:

- Open a pop-up library on Main Street in a previously boarded up or unused storefront
- Set up a booth at local festivals, fundraisers and farmer's markets (look for those that offer free or discounted booth rental fees for nonprofits)
- Attend municipal/community board events or town hall meetings
- Take advantage of Meetup.com as a place to promote your events for free
- Post flyers in grocery stores, on bulletin boards, at the local small business association and unemployment office
- Advertise rental space for community or government groups and business meetings
- If you don't have the capacity to get out into your community, find local advocates who will
  - Which of your patrons would jump at the chance to volunteer and be the voice of your library?
  - Which local reporters could you call on to leverage your library's story?

Create programs that surprise and delight others—and get the word out. You want a non-library user to pause and take a look at the library in a way they haven't before. Get them through the door and they'll be amazed at all you offer. *(See Sharing Your Story: Key Trendlines, page 22.)*



Story of Place

How to Tell Your Local Community Story

Story of place is one of your greatest—and sometimes untapped—storytelling assets. Your library's mission is defined by the community, town or city it serves.

Look at the people around your library. The mother browsing picture books with her chatty toddler. A documentary filmmaker listening to oral histories through a headset. A business woman setting aside her Smartphone for a watercolor class. What they have in common is story of place. It's the foundation for creating bonds of connection, emotional investment and a shared agenda.

When thinking about story of place, start with an inspiring story. Consider: Why does our town matter? What is it about this land, our history, our people that is distinct? And how does this library represent the values that are embedded here? Maybe you live in a town settled by the Amish, or a place where almost everyone's dad and granddad worked in the mills. Or perhaps you live in an economically distressed community, where jobs are scarce and people are facing hard times. Where new immigrants are struggling to learn the language, much less the latest technology.

When you recognize what your community values and takes pride in, or what specific hardships and challenges it's facing—you can speak to this directly in the story you tell. Root your story in place and in what's real for people, and it will resonate with them.

> ***"People may go to the library looking for information, but they find each other there.***
>
> *–Robert D. Putnam, Author of Bowling Alone*

Here are some ideas:

1. Claim Your Heritage

Pennsylvania has a rich history in the American library movement. Home to Ben Franklin and Andrew Carnegie, the state is a living testament to the power of libraries.

- Pay tribute to your history and connect with people's existing sense of pride.
- Remind people that they are standing, living and learning on the same ground where libraries came to be.

2. The Role of the Library as Historian

In many places, libraries are the local historians, serving as mini-museums for the towns and cities they're a part of.

- Give talks on how you collect and maintain local history, archives and artifacts.
- Feature exhibits of photographs, newspaper clippings or artifacts that celebrate your history.

3. Give People a Sense of Belonging

It's part of the human condition: we yearn to belong. We crave connection. And thanks to technology, we're more "connected" than ever before—or are we? So many people feel rootless these days. More are working from home, all alone, for hours. Others find themselves in places and situations they didn't plan. So in spite of being globally connected, humans are feeling more socially isolated than ever before. This is what is bringing people back to the library.

- The library is where people who share a place in common come together. It's a home away from home, and a place to work outside of work or a lonely home office.
- It's a community hub where everyone is welcome, and everyone belongs.

Mapping Your Assets

This exercise will help you understand what is distinct and important about the particular place (town, city or county) that your library serves. Take a few minutes to reflect on the questions below and complete the worksheet. Use additional pages if needed.

LANDSCAPE
Describe the landscape of your community or town. This includes geography, weather, architecture, climate, visual aesthetics, and the general mood/disposition of the city.

HISTORY
Describe the history, reputation, and symbols attributed to your community or town. This includes historical events, icons, figures, places, and the economic role your town has played.

CULTURE
Describe the culture of your community or town. This includes food, music, art, innovation, demographics, and anything else your community or town is known or admired for.

ASSETS
Describe the unique and valued assets of your community or town. This includes sectors of industry, demographics, culture, history, climate, etc. Why do people visit? Why do people want to live there?

CHALLENGE
Describe the challenges facing your local community: economic, social, political, and demographic. How are social services most heavily strained or impacted? What other issues are on the agenda?

CHARACTER
Describe the values of your city. Write down single words that capture the energy, mindset, and preferences of your city's culture. What are you known for? How would a visitor describe your city (in single words)? How would a long-time resident describe your town?

Once you've completed this exercise, review your answers. What are the underlying values that speak to your place? And how do those values inform and support where your library is headed?

Profiling Your Community

Research Basics

In order to tell the right stories, you have to really know your community. You can't live in the Land of Assumptions. Research gives you the data and insights you need—increasing the likelihood that you're providing value to the people you most want to reach. Keep in mind: The best stories combine both quantitative (numbers) research, and qualitative (anecdotal) research.

Research Frameworks

Statistics. Statistics is all about numbers. It's quantitative research at its core. Here are some tips for identifying statistical research that is already out there:

- Look to sources in your library to find numbers you need. Access the census and other databases (both local and regional).
- Look to local business boards, universities or chambers of commerce.
- You might also look to the data you collect internally—how many people are attending classes, events, or checking out certain books.

Surveys. Surveys are often a great way to get anonymous data, without personal interaction. Depending on how you word the survey questions, you can collect quantitative and qualitative data this way. You can also collect comparative data between groups of people. A simple survey can identify new stakeholders, volunteers, opportunities and community needs. Here are some ideas for how you might incorporate surveys:

- Survey patrons on how they value and/or perceive your local library.
- Survey participants in your events and classes.
- Send out surveys through your newsletters or as part of your annual appeal.

Interviews. Interviews are particularly useful for getting to the story behind a user's experiences. They help you gain insight and feedback on situations. Here are some tips:

- When interviewing someone, remind them that they are the expert.
- Ask them open-ended questions, such as: Why do you come to the library? What ideas do you have about how we can reach other people? What are we doing well?

Your Research Framework

Before conducting research of any kind, get clear on your goals and strategy. Here are some questions to help you plan for the process. Think about how you can humanize your subject and bring your story to life. What questions can you ask to provide deeper insight into the lives and needs of your research subjects? Here are some ideas. Use a separate sheet of paper as needed.

Know why you want to do research in the first place. Start with assumptions to test and build out what you think you know, and what you know you don't know.

What are you providing or trying to solve? What is it about the situation you want to know more about?

Who are you trying to support? What people/groups do you need to talk with to answer your questions?

Create a research plan. Depending on what you want to do, figure out the best type of research to conduct, and how you will go about it.

Is what you want to learn driven by data (numbers)? Can you study data that is already available, via census or other sources? What can you gain from your own surveys or interviews?

If you will create your own survey or conduct interviews, describe the setting for the research (e.g., a SurveyMonkey online, phone interviews, in-person interviews).

Set a clear, realistic goal for your research, such as "we will survey 40 people in the next four weeks." How many people will you engage?

What is the timeframe for when the research will start and end?

How will you approach/invite participants to be part of your research?

Capture your learning. After you do your research, analyze your findings. Look for common themes and compelling stories you can share. List the challenges and opportunities you heard from participants. Distill your findings into sharable documents.

What did you learn? What surprised you?

What stories have come out of this research? How can you share them with others?

Sharing Your Story: Key Trendlines

When you share your story, you communicate to people what your library offers today. What programs and services are there for them? What are you inviting people into?

These days, libraries are more than "just books." You already know that, and your community needs to know that too. Show them how through better storytelling.

Remind people that when they walk into a library, their world gets bigger. Libraries offer a greater sense of what's out there, and a real-time, real-person information desk to help point the way. Through the stories you share, you can inspire your community members, capture their imagination, and let them know you are there to guide them on their journey.

On the following pages, you'll find some sample trendlines in libraries today that will inspire you. You can use these trendlines to spark a discussion with your staff—to find the stories that resonate with them and your community. You can also use them as a starting point to elevate your library and its offerings. Together with your staff, you might identify other trends that aren't listed here, and use those to conceptualize your story.

> ***90 percent of Americans say public libraries are important to their community.***
>
> *– Pew Research Studies, 2013*

Libraries as a Community Hub and Convener

As a library, remember you have this important asset to offer: **a safe, enjoyable and community-minded space for people to gather and meet their mission.** In many communities, libraries are the only non-commercial, non-denominational place to gather. They are a true third destination—not home and not work. At a time when we're all feeling alienated and separated from each other, the library is a place where people of all ages, demographics and economic strata come together.

> ***Free public meeting spaces are a key service by libraries to their communities.***
>
> *– Forbes Magazine, Why Public Libraries Matter: And How They Can Do More, January 16, 2013*

Your Story Here

In what ways does your library serve as a community hub and convener? Be as specific as possible.

[2]Library Services in the Digital Age, Pew Research Center, January 2013: http://libraries.pewinternet.org

Changes in Lifelong Learning, Career and Information Sourcing

With jobs disappearing and the pressure to reinvent ourselves on a regular basis, many people in the community are wondering: What's my place in the world? How do I make a living for myself and my family? What resources are available to me?

Libraries help people find answers to these questions. They've become local career centers, and offer resources for people to get to wherever they want to go next. Whether someone is in the midst of career transition, thinking of starting a new business, or simply wanting to access the resources in their community, **the library has something for everyone.**

Your Story Here

In what ways does your library facilitate learning and career transitions for different age groups? Be as specific as possible.

> ***My guess is (it will be) about 300 years until computers are as good as, say, your local reference library in search.***
>
> *– Craig Silverstein, Director of Technology, Google*

The Role of Librarian as Guide, Curator and Facilitator

As information consumers, we've shifted to an age of unprecedented independence. People can (and often do) consume information all day long on the Internet. Yet, is it the right information? Is it true? Is it real?

Librarians are a trusted guide through a galaxy of infinite knowledge. Librarians help people discover what they're looking for, and more importantly, discern what sources they can trust and believe. You are the safer bet, saving people time and frustration in the long run.

> ***People turn to librarians to help them sift through the 10 million answers they find on the Internet. We're more like navigators.***
>
> *– Amy Ryan, New York Times, Breaking Out of the Library Mold, March 7, 2014*

Your Story Here

In what ways have you helped people discern whether information is reliable, accurate or slanted? List specific examples of moments where you have served as a guide for patrons, helping them achieve their goals.

Public's Need for Technology Literacy

Many people feel lost when it comes to technology. This is where libraries come in. You are a place someone can get questions answered and learn what's possible.

> ***About 50 percent of library patrons require help from a librarian, particularly around the use of technology.***
>
> *– Pew Research Studies, 2012*

One of the most vital services a library provides today is the availability of free computers and Internet access. **At a library, anyone can hop online and find what they need.** From the days of Andrew Carnegie, libraries have offered people of all economic strata a place where they can get an education for free—and feel just a little more empowered.

Your Story Here

What classes, resources or support does your library offer around technology? How are you helping your patrons "keep up" with their tech needs (e.g., websites, blogs, social media, etc.)? Be as specific as possible.

Popular Perceptions of the Library

For most of us, the library evokes a sense of nostalgia and possibility. At the library, we are all explorers—pioneers on the path of our own discoveries. The library shows us that anything is possible, and it's all within our reach. It also has all the popular things we're looking for—books, e-books, magazines, movies and more.

Libraries have always evolved to match the culture of which it's a part. Whether it's for the young teen who discovers his love of reading through comic books, the new mom who is searching for healthy dinner recipes for her family, or the entrepreneur who is embarking on a new business idea—**libraries meet people where they are.**

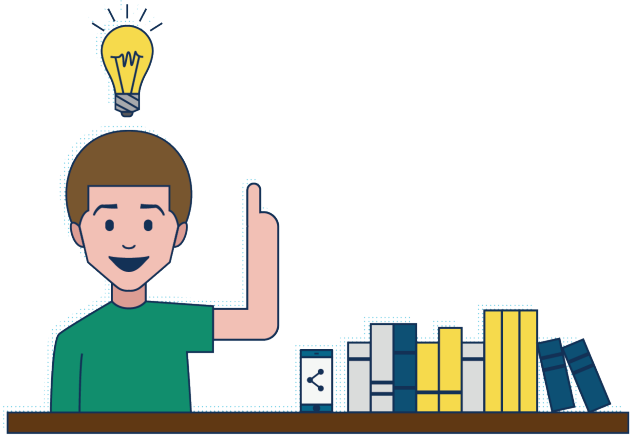
> ***You blew $150K on an education you could have gotten in $1.50 in late fees from the library.***
>
> *– Matt Damon, Good Will Hunting (1997)*

Your Story Here

In what ways are you staying current and hip to the things people care about? What does your library offer that's popular among various age groups? Be as specific as possible.

[3]How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities, Pew Research Center, January 2013: http://libraries.pewinternet.org

Crafting Your Story



The Language of Innovation

In today's world, the stories people most want to hear are about innovation. We gravitate to the new, the different, the latest model or update. If you talk about how your library is innovating, suddenly key audiences will be curious to learn more.

What is innovation, anyway? People define it in different ways. However, most point to innovation as a process of doing something new or different, with the intention of improving the function, value, or experience for your audience. In a recent survey, librarians said they used innovation to:

- Keep the library relevant to patrons' lives
- Respond to the technology needs of our community
- Help the community see and appreciate all the library has to offer

There's a good chance you're already "innovating," without even realizing it. A new knitting program for seniors; a redesigned lobby or teen technology space. A NASA program for kids; or your library hosting TEDx talks. Call it what you want, it's all innovation.

When you label something as innovation, it grows in perceived value. You can use the storytelling techniques in this toolkit to share what you're already doing and cast it through the lens of innovation. Use the "i-word" and ears perk up.

> ***Innovation gives libraries permission and the excitement to say to people: Let me tell you some of the cool new things we're doing, and how we're evolving around exactly what you're interested in. People want and need to hear that story.***
>
> *– Cathi Alloway, Schlow Centre Region Library*

Teaching 5 Literacies

What's your new literacy story?

If you've been looking for a story to tell, here it is. These five literacy areas identified by the PA Forward Initiative are a perfect jumping-off point for you to demonstrate your library's service to the community, and inform people about the services and programs that support these literacies. Pick any one of these five areas to show your patrons and public how your library elevates learning: Basic Literacy, Information Literacy, Civic and Social Literacy, Health Literacy and Financial Literacy.

Find out more at PAForward.org.

Assessing Your Technology

Looking for a way to tell your technology story?

Like it or not, your library is judged by the technology resources and capabilities it offers. "Edge" is a new management and leadership tool that helps libraries and local governments assess and articulate the technology assets they offer in order to better support their community. By using this tool, you can keep score with the technology you have, and keep planning into the future.

Find out more and register at LibraryEdge.org.

How to Craft a Story Arc

How to use this worksheet:
Great tales have a story arc—a beginning, a middle, and an end. They capture our attention, pull us in, explore a key idea, and through the arc of change, help us see through a fresh perspective. Without a journey, there is no story.

This worksheet is designed to assemble the key elements of a story. Choose one character—a member of your constituency, such as a patron, a funder, or a parent, an elder, a teen. (See Library Audiences on page 13.) Make that character your protagonist and construct a story around them by going through the questions in the worksheet. Keep it short and interesting.

CHARACTERS

- Who is the focal point of your story? Choose one stakeholder to focus the story on.
- What exactly do they want? How do they see/understand their world?
- What other characters are key to bringing this story to life?

CIRCUMSTANCE

- Set the scene: Where is the character and what's going on? What's the larger context?
- What will make the listener feel and empathize?
- What is your intention/motivation in telling this story?

CHOICE

- What is the core challenge or dilemma the character faces?
- How can your library help the character resolve this challenge?
- Offer a twist: What makes this story's arc interesting, creative or unexpected?

YOUR STORY HERE

Now take your notes from above and create your story. How can you humanize your story? Don't forget a few descriptive details about your character. What about the ending is surprising, unexpected—yet makes the audience feel good? Try to end with a sense of possibility.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES

Circle the words or phrases in your story that have the most energy for you. What stands out? What feels the most alive, compelling, critical? What parts are you most excited or passionate about? Write them here.

STORY TITLE

Draw on your favorite lines, phrases, or imagery from the story. Brainstorm a simple yet alluring tagline—a short, bite-sized title of your story here.

Reframing the Conversation

As you start to share your story, you will come up against those who want to perpetuate the old story about libraries, or those who simply don't know any better. Even within library walls, there can be a need to reframe staff beliefs or internal misconceptions. There's a way to shift mental models—to change someone's point of view—without coming across as defensive or argumentative.

Here are some simple steps:

1 **Validate the person's point of view.** Show them that you hear their words, and that you understand why they might have that perception.

2 **Introduce new information.** What is important to share that might open them to other possibilities? Show them the opportunity rather than the contradiction.

3 **Invite them to see for themselves.** Seeing is believing. Offer them a "call to action" where they can visit the library and change their own perception.

Want some examples? Here are a few common beliefs about libraries, and how you can smartly redirect the conversation.

Not every library has the same challenges, or faces the same community mindsets. Use the blank spaces at the bottom to fill in some of the common beliefs you've heard about your library. (Use additional paper if needed). Then brainstorm some ways you and your team might reframe the conversation, offering the listener a new perspective.

Common Misconception	Reframe the Conversation
Aren't libraries just about books?	Books are just one format and collection that libraries have traditionally made available to the public. Many libraries now offer e-books, technology, tools and other resources that people value and need. When is the last time you visited your library?
Everything is online, so why do we still need the library?	Libraries offer both the Internet and a real person to help you find exactly what you're looking for—and discern if it's accurate or not. Plus, at the library, you can learn to create your own content. Have you ever wanted to create your own website or blog?
Who still goes to the library?	Actually, libraries still meet the needs of many generations, at all stages of life—children, teens, college students, job seekers, parents, newly retired folks and seniors. It has something for everyone—including you!
Common staff belief: We've never done that before.	Libraries have always changed to reflect the changing needs of the community. Here is what people are looking for these days, and this is how it fits within the mission of our institution.
Common belief:	How I can reframe it:
Common belief:	How I can reframe it:

How to Tell the Possibility Story

With so many perceptions about the library today, it can be easy to get defensive when you feel those perceptions aren't correct: "We don't have any money to innovate," or "No one pays attention to us anymore." Your instinct might be to start with the problem, yet consider this: When you start with a problem, people disconnect. They might even take it personally.

What people want is a possibility story, a potential story—one that will get them charged-up about what's happening. Share your enthusiasm about what your library is up to. Are you offering yoga for cancer survivors? Job training for returning vets? Show people how excited you are about it. Are you doing campfire storytime with s'mores and hot cocoa? Go ahead, tell the world. Your passion is contagious.

Give people something they can connect to emotionally, something they can care about. Only then will they be willing to support and work on your behalf.

Want to capture people's attention? Remind them of what is possible. Share something exciting that reflects what people really want or need today.

The Possibility Story is simply the process of being a cheerleader pointing to topics and issues of relevance. Look to the places where people are struggling or have an unmet need, and then speak to some ways your library can serve or support them.

This is your possibility story. Think back to your community's needs around technology literacy, career development, educational learning, community gathering, etc…

Start your possibility story with the words "Imagine if…" Look at the following examples and come up with a few of your own:

Imagine if…there was someone to teach you how to use your e-reader.

Imagine if…you had a place to meet with your community group.

Imagine if…you could find digitized records of your local community's history.

Imagine if…you had a safe place you knew your kids could go after school.

Imagine if… _____

Imagine if… _____

Imagine if… _____

Imagine if… _____

Imagine if… _____

Gathering Stories from Patrons

Ask the Right Questions

Gathering stories will help you become more strategic in developing new services. In order to gather great stories, you need to ask great questions.

Ideally you want to gather stories from people in real time. This might mean approaching them as they're leaving a class or event, or handing them a story-gathering form when they check out books. You might also pick a week to feature a "Story Booth" in your library, interviewing patrons and collecting their stories on film, audio, or in writing.

You don't need to ask questions in a formal setting or story campaign; in fact, sometimes the best stories come from casual conversations you and your team have with patrons. What's key is to orient your staff to listen for everyday stories, and to have a simple process for collecting/documenting/sharing the stories internally.

Always make sure the question you ask is one that gives people energy. If they connect with the question, the story will follow. Make story gathering a part of your library culture.

Action Step: Ask Patrons These Questions

- Do you remember the first time you ever walked into a library?
- How is technology affecting your life?
- How has the library given you hope or guidance at a difficult time in your life?
- How has the library influenced your child?
- Imagine your community wtihout your library.

On the next page, you'll find a basic template for gathering patron stories. This form is for your staff to use internally, as a way to keep track of conversations you have with patrons. Feel free to customize the form in a way that works best for you.

Directions for Staff

1. Take five minutes after a conversation to capture patron stories and ideas. (You can use the sample questions provided above, or come up with your own.)
2. Aim for each staff member to capture one story or conversation per week.
3. Store these forms in a file that staff have access to.
4. When and if time allows, have a staff member, volunteer or intern transcribe the forms electronically, so you can track them and use them when needed.

> ***Stories are just data with a soul.***
> *– Brené Brown, Author and Public Speaker*

Balancing Data with Human-Interest Stories

These days, there's huge pressure to show numbers and validate your impact. Yet it's easy to forget that a set of numbers is meaningless without a story attached to it. In fact, research shows the human brain cannot think in big numbers. We need to connect to a face, and a story.

Humanizing your work is critical. When you put a face on your story, it instantly becomes personal. As human beings, we relate to each other based on our personal stories. Here are some tips:

- **It's easy to talk in big terms when addressing a community or business leader.** Talk about the individual story first, and then use your data and trends to back it up.
- **Share the story, and then give it context:** "This is just one example of the 500 families in our community dealing with the same issue."
- **Keep it short.** Use simple, digestible stories and data they will remember.

[4]See StoryCorps.org/your-library to learn more, and see TechSoup.org for free and discounted equipment for libraries.
[5]Check out Zahmoo.com, designed specifically to capture, tag, and manage a collection of stories.

What's Your Library Story?

What Library Story Did You Hear Today? A Story Collection Form for Library Staff

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name of the Person You Spoke With: _____ Age range: _____

Their reason for visiting the library today:

What is their library story or idea? What's one way the library has touched or changed their life?

Do you have permission to use their story? ☐ **yes** ☐ **no**

Anonymously? ☐ **yes** ☐ **no** By Name: _____

Public Speaking

Capturing Audience Attention

Public speaking is one of the biggest fears people share. If you shy away from getting in front of a room full of people, you're in good company. Thankfully, there are some effective ways to calm your nerves and help you connect with an audience.

Start with your own personal story. People want to know and understand your personal motivations—where do you come from, why do you care about this issue? Maybe you've lived in the community for 25 years, or you grew up in a small rural town. Perhaps your mother and grandmother were teachers, giving you a love and appreciation of libraries early on.

Regardless of what your personal story is, you want to give your audience the feeling that, "Ahh, she's one of us…" or "Ohhhhh, he gets it." Your personal story is all about closing the gap between you and your audience.

STORYTELLING TIP: Learn to speak to strangers as if they're already your best friends. When you set a tone of familiarity, the audience remembers more than what you say. They also recall the feeling of the experience. And that good feeling makes it easier for them to relax and really hear your message.

Next, validate the worldview or experience of your audience. Ask the questions that are on everyone's minds—or address the white elephant in the room: Are books going extinct? Do people still go to the library? Will libraries be here in 50 years? This will get their attention. Then, you can address these misconceptions head-on. *(See Reframing the Conversation on page 28.)*

Give your audience something they can relate to and get behind.

7 Non-Cliché Tips for Public Speaking

1. **Make it about them.** Try to use the words "you" more often than "I." Yes, share your personal story, but then bring it back to them and their experience.

2. **Have a story worth telling.** When you have a story worth telling, the story tells itself. Make sure you have something meaningful and emotional to share—people will listen.

3. **Keep it short.** Short, pithy speeches are almost always preferred over long and cliché.

4. **Take a risk.** Audiences get bored easily. And as a public speaker, so do you. The world's best public speakers keep it fresh by always taking a risk. If you're working at your edge, the audience will be on the edge of their seats.

5. **Include a call to action.** Invite your audience into the story, giving them the opportunity to co-create the next chapter. Be sure to end with suggested next steps or a clear role they can play.

6. **Be present, not perfect.** The audience doesn't expect you to be perfect. In fact, you're allowed to be rough around the edges. This makes you and your speech more real. What your audience needs more than perfection is for you to be present—to really show up and connect with them. If your presentation slides malfunction, make a joke about it.

7. **Detach from the outcome.** An audience can smell desperation or a sales pitch a mile away. Instead, keep your focus on sharing authentic passion and establish empathy with your audience's and what they're looking for. The outcome will take care of itself.

Social Media Primer

Social media is an important storytelling tool. Here are the most common social media tools, along with some ideas for how your library can use them, if you aren't doing so already:

Facebook. Facebook is a place to connect personally with your patrons. Post some of your favorite reading recommendations, both new releases and classics. Promote upcoming classes. You can also ask a question, like: "What book would you want to have on a desert island?" Try to include an image with your posts, as posts with images on Facebook get more response.

Twitter. Twitter is a real-time social media feed. It's fast, it's current, and it's used by a technologically sophisticated audience. This is a place to post local news and updates, links to interesting reads, and questions you want to crowd-source.

Google+ Hangouts. Google+ is a great platform for hosting group chats, interviews with authors, and broadcasting a live event from the library. All you need is a webcam and a free account to get started.

YouTube Channel. YouTube is a place to post recordings of live events from your library. Again, all you need is a webcam and a free YouTube account.

Pinterest. Pinterest is a fun way to communicate using visual images. You can create "boards" (think virtual bulletin boards) featuring images of book covers, quotes, or characters.

Instagram. Take a picture or video at one of your library events, choose a filter to transform its look and feel, then post it to Instagram—it's that easy. It's a fun way to share visual moments with your library fans and followers. In the process, you'll create a visual library to use in proposals and other promotions.

7 Tips for Developing a Social Media Strategy

1. **Think goals, not tools.** Why do you need social media—purely as a search engine? To leverage your networks? Attract new patrons? Meet new partners? First know what you want to accomplish, and then discern which communication channel is the best match to your goal.

2. **Dedicate staff or volunteer time to social media.** A social media following takes time to cultivate and maintain, and you'll only get results if you stay active. Decide if you have the capacity for social media management in your library, or if you need to bring in an intern or volunteer to manage it for you.

3. **Get clear on the library voice you want to project.** Your voice is the personality behind your message. Do you want your tweets or posts to come across as celebratory, playful, personal? Scholarly, professional, or polished? It may take a little while to develop a consistent voice, and it helps to decide what is (and isn't) appropriate.

4. **Set up a clear process for who, what, how and why tweets, posts or updates will happen.** Who will be responsible for posting or tweeting? How many times per day or week? And what are the types of updates will you send out—on what topics?

5. **Listen before you talk.** You don't need to start "speaking" on social media right away. Set up an account first and search for topics (using searchable #hashtags on Twitter, for example) that interest you. Get a sense of how and what people are posting about. Wait until you know you have something to add.

6. **Focus on quality over quantity.** Remember in any social media scene, it's not about how many friends or followers you have—it's about the quality of your network. Don't just create connections—build relationships. Familiarity leads to sustained engagement.

7. **Finally, take the plunge!** Don't overthink it. You can always cancel your Twitter or Facebook account, or stop posting if it doesn't work for you. The easiest way to learn is to get in there and try.

Partnerships

Opportunities for Partnerships

More than 50 percent of Pennsylvania libraries said that partnerships were important to them.

If you're like most libraries, you know you need partnerships, but you might not know where to begin. Because of time and staff constraints, many libraries wait for partnerships to come to them, instead of actively seeking new relationships.

Finding successful partnerships may be easier than you think. Start close to home.

- What are the opportunities for you to partner with other libraries, or develop new programs and services?
- How can you help each other—for example, sharing the ideas or costs to promote a new event or program?

Once you've looked to other libraries as partners, broaden the scope. According to the recent survey, Pennsylvania libraries see untapped potential in partnerships with schools, local businesses, chambers of commerce, historical societies, nursing and retirement communities, youth groups, local veterinarians, animal shelters, and more. *(See Library Audiences on page 13 for more ideas.)*

No matter who you partner with, remember this: **Libraries have a distinct leverage point in any partnership. You serve the community—all of the community.** You have a broad platform with a high level of trust. And chances are, you have more traffic coming through your doors than any other county agency or social service program around.

You have something that anyone can relate to. You offer your partners a chance to tap into your widespread reach throughout the community. Your library has star power: Start reaching out. You'll be surprised by how many people are thrilled to know the library wants to work with them.

Using Story and Communication to Align Expectations

Partnerships always sound good, yet the reality is they can be a tremendous amount of work—and it's easy to get stuck doing most of it. Librarians tend to be givers. It's frustrating when you discover your partner doesn't share your same goals or commitment level. Here are a couple of tips that can help launch a more balanced partnership right from the start:

• **Focus on the relationship.** Look for shared values and interests. Most of us wouldn't jump into a marriage without dating first. So it should be with potential partners in library projects. As Elvis sang, "Only fools rush in." Let each relationship progress gradually and unfold naturally.

• **Get clear about your own story, and find partners who are clear about theirs.** Only then can you have a relationship where "what you care about is what I care about…what you see is what I see," and "we're in this together, to help each other."

STORYTELLING TIP:

When approaching potential partners, share with them one story of how *your* library serves *their* audience—and how they can benefit from collaborating with you.

Checklist for Building Healthy Partnerships

More often than not, successful partnerships come down to three things: a common goal, shared passion for a project, and clearly defined expectations for all parties involved. This partnership checklist will help you share what you need with potential partners, and discover whether an organization is the best partner for you. Take this checklist with you when talking with potential partners.

Have an honest, real conversation with potential partners. Ask them questions that will help you decide if it's a good match. Make sure they share your goals and passion for a project. Together, discuss:

- ☐ What are their interests and issues, and how do they align with yours?
- ☐ How much time do they have to give? How committed are they to this project?
- ☐ What other resources, assets or expertise can they bring to the table? What kind of support do they need from the library?
- ☐ How will you divide responsibilities? How will you keep the lines of communication open, and make sure there's follow-through?

Create a clear, written agreement that details mutual expectations.

- ☐ What is the overall goal of the partnership? What outcomes do you hope to achieve together? How will you measure success?
- ☐ Who is responsible for what tasks, and when?
- ☐ How will you support each other? How will you hold each other accountable?
- ☐ What's the timeline for the project or partnership?
- ☐ What will a successful partnership look like?

The Next Chapter of the Story

Your Library Story—Now and Into the Future

Know this: You have a story the world wants to hear. People are longing for the learning, the connection, and the sense of belonging that only you—the local library—can lend.

Storytelling is a powerful communication tool—one you can use to rekindle people's excitement, imagination, and sense of hope. By sharing your library's story and all that you offer, you can give people an "a-ha" moment. One in which they come away thinking, "Yes! I want to be a part of that!" "Yes, there's a place for me there!"

Remember, if you're not telling your story, somebody else is telling it for you. Take the reins of your own story. Start with your personal story—why you love this library and what you hope to see happen in the future. If you share your enthusiasm about your library, your work and your future, you will invite others to do the same.

Action Steps

Are you ready to step into your storytelling future? It all starts with your intentions. Write three story action steps that you can commit to in the next three months:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

We love stories that make us feel good about ourselves. Go for the happy ending.

Storytelling Cheat Sheet

Congratulations! You made it. Take a deep breath. You covered a lot of ground in this Storytelling Toolkit.

What's next? You may want to work your way back to the areas where you still have questions or need more support. Or start from the beginning, and take it step-by-step. Here's a quick recap for how you can navigate the toolkit, and build on each of the storytelling steps.

Your 7 Steps to Storytelling M-A-S-T-E-R-Y

M

Motivations:

- ☐ Are you clear on your personal story, about why and how you love your library? *See page 10*
- ☐ Does your organization have a clear, consistent story that your staff knows and shares? *See page 12*
- ☐ Do you know why you need to share your story in the first place? *See page 8*

A

Audience:

- ☐ Did you identify your audience—who you most need to be in relationship with at this time? *See page 13*
- ☐ Have you tailored your message to meet their needs and interests? *See page 14*

S

Stakes:

- ☐ Are you clear on your story of place, and how it distinctly positions your library? *See page 18*
- ☐ Have your learned the needs of your community so you can address them through your services and programs? *See page 20*

T

Truth:

- ☐ Depending on what you want to achieve, have you chosen a storyline to elevate? *See page 22*
- ☐ Have you planned steps to spread that storyline far and wide? *See page 23-27*

E

Emotion:

- ☐ Have you put a face to your story? *See page 26*
- ☐ Have you used the language of innovation to show what you're already doing that is new and different? *See page 25*

R

Relevance:

- ☐ Have you identified the one misconception about your library you hear the most? *See page 28*
- ☐ Have you shifted the conversation from problem to possibility? *See page 29*

Y

Yes!

- ☐ Have you gone forth and gathered stories from patrons? *See page 30*
- ☐ Shared your stories from the platform of public speaking? *See page 32*
- ☐ Bolstered your social media efforts? *See page 33*
- ☐ Used stories to educate and strengthen partnerships? *See page 34*

Terms to Know

Audience
The people you are trying to reach, from whom you want attention. Your audience are your customers—the people and organizations you directly serve, or those that have an influence on your library. Audiences today don't just want to be spectators. They want to participate.

Brand
The process of creating word, image, and symbolic associations in the mind of your audience. Perception is king. Your brand is only as strong as the stories people tell about you. Provide a set of experiences that people want to tell great stories about.

Culture
The process by which a set of values and beliefs are socialized into reality. Culture defines the boundaries of what is acceptable and possible. If you want to learn about a culture, listen to the stories. If you want to change the culture, you need to change the stories.

> ***"The stories we tell make our world.***

Innovation
The process of introducing new ideas, devices, or methods. The focus is on improving and making things better. Identify places where frustration, challenges, or obstacles exist and find a meaningful way to shift people's experience.

Storytelling
The conveying of events in words and images, often by improvisation or embellishment. Stories or narratives have been shared in every culture as a means of communication, education, cultural preservation, and reinforcing moral values.

Resources

To further explore this topic, read the book written by Michael Margolis, CEO and founder of Get Storied (creators of this toolkit). You can download a free digital copy (go to GetStoried.com), or you can buy a print or Kindle version on Amazon.com:

Believe Me: A Storytelling Manifesto for Change-Makers and Innovators

Books:

Resonate by Nancy Duarte
The Story Factor by Annette Simmons
Lead with a Story by Paul Smith
Winning the Story Wars by Jonah Sachs
Wired for Story by Lisa Cron
The Leaders Guide to Storytelling by Steve Denning
The Nonprofit Narrative by Dan Portnoy
Storytelling Best Practices by Andy Goodman
Partnering with Purpose: A Guide to Strategic Partnership Development for Libraries and Other Organizations by Janet Crowther

Training Programs:

Story University by Get Storied: GetStoried.com
The Center for Digital Storytelling: StoryCenter.org
The Goodman Center: TheGoodmanCenter.com
The Center for Story Based Strategy: StorybasedStrategy.org

Other Resources:

StoryCorps.org/your-library: Helping libraries collect stories of the community
Edudemic.com/diy-infographics: for Do-It-Yourself InfoGraphics
PAForward.org: Pennsylvania Forward Initiative
TechSoup.org: Equipment and services for nonprofits and libraries
TheMoth.org: True Stories Told Live
StoryNet.org: National Storytelling Network
Zahmoo.com: A story collection database software tool

Storytelling on the Future of Libraries

In 2013, Get Storied was commissioned by the California State Library to create a Story Map for the future of libraries. This is published under creative commons and available for download at www.library.ca.gov/lds/docs/CAPublicLibraryStoryMap.pdf.

If you would like a round-up of key storytellling strategies for libraries, visit GetStoried.com/librarystory.

“Great stories happen to those who can tell them.

– Ira Glass, This American Life

Altoona Area Public Library

State Library of Pennsylvania 1745

Get Storied

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