



Community Engagement: *It's Easier Than You Think*

I can
do this

Ideas

Walk around the neighborhood where your library is located and see if you notice any barriers that would keep people from coming in

Plan a focus group for frequent library visitors to find out what they like about the library and what they feel could be improved. View the archived webinar "How to Listen to Your Community 2" on the Texas State Library online training site <https://onlinetraining.tsl.texas.gov>

Ask a trusted, honest friend who doesn't use the library to visit and report back on her/his first impressions. Is the library welcoming? Does it seem like a friendly place to visit?

Look at the US Census data for your community and see if you think the demographics of the community reflect who is visiting your library:
<http://www.census.gov/>

Call your Chamber of Commerce and ask to present at a meeting

Make sure your list of media contacts is up-to-date

Find out when and where your local governing authority meets; put future meetings on your calendar

Share a list of community leaders with your Board and see if any of your Board knows the leaders personally and would facilitate an introduction

Research nonprofit organizations in your community; who might be potential partners?

Call your local workforce office and ask them if they have materials they would like to share at the library

Ask members of your staff or trusted supporters to volunteer to give local presentations on the library

Set up a meeting with local official(s) and ask her/him if they have any research needs; volunteer to help them

Review the Best Small Public Library in America guidelines and think about what your library is doing in all categories:
http://lj.libraryjournal.com/awards/best-small-library-in-america-award-nomination-guidelines/#_

Ideas

Set up a “Today the Library Helped Me ...” box (sample answers: Complete My Resume, Find a Job, Email My Grandchildren, Find a Book on Science). Post the answers nearby!



Think of 3 “Done in a Day” volunteer projects (for example, painting, a book drive, beautification projects) that you could shop around to local businesses/schools/service organizations



Research local meetings (for example, local nonprofit organizations, workforce groups, education groups) that you could attend to learn more about the issues in your community from a non-library perspective



Plan to host an event at your library that will involve local officials; breakfasts can be good times to reach busy people (for example, “Good Neighbor Day”)



Read ALA’s “A Step-by-Step Guide to ‘Turning Outward’ to your Community”: www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/libraries-transforming-communities/resources-for-library-professionals



Write a press release using these tips:

http://www.webjunction.org/documents/webjunction/Press_Release_Tips.html



Contact your local paper about submitting an op-ed piece



Identify 3-4 new prospects for your Library Board; in the best of all possible worlds, who would sit on the Board? Aim high



If there are groups in your community not visiting the library, try to determine the leaders in those communities. Reach out to those people and ask to meet with them to get their input on the library (possible follow up: ask for their assistance in facilitating meetings about the library)



Drive or walk around your community and see where people are gathering outside the library. Is there a way to bring the library to them?



Review your mission statement—could it be revised to be more community focused?



Scan local calendars for meetings that would benefit from library representation



Meet with local daycare providers to see what their needs are



Research local service organizations and ask to present at one of their meetings



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Ideas

Identify the local disaster relief coordinator and volunteer the library as a resource in the event of an emergency



Review grant guidelines from 2-3 foundations and think about potential projects that could benefit your community:

<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ld/funding/resources/index.html>



Identify local events (for example, spring or fall festivals, July 4 parades) where the library can staff a booth or create a fun float



Identify your local Economic Development Corporation office; do they know about business-friendly resources at the library? What are their needs?



Create a Teen Advisory Group to get their input on tech and programming needs at the library



Designate space for local artists to display their work



Map businesses and organizations close to the library; set up meetings with 2 or 3 to get their thoughts on the library



Identify some organizations in your community that are thriving and “getting it right.” Ask to meet with them for ideas and input



Review your evaluation forms—are you asking the right questions? Are you capturing stories of how the library has changed people or improved their lives?



Listen to archived Webjunction webinar, “Transforming Library Spaces for Community Engagement”:

www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/transforming-library-space-for-community-engagement.html



Register to participate in the annual Outside the Lines project:

<http://getoutsidethelines.org/>



Research opportunities to hear ideas for different services from young people and Millennials



Follow community organizations, your governing authority, and community leaders on Twitter and via other social media. Don't hesitate to retweet what others are doing; they will notice and appreciate it!



Like FB pages of libraries you admire so that you can borrow their ideas



Research “Work Like a Patron Day” where librarians experience the library from the patron's perspective:

http://www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Work_Like_A_Patron_Day



Ideas

Schedule time to listen to Pottsboro Public Library’s archived webinar “Flip the Script: Changing the Direction of Your Library” on the Texas State Library online training site <https://onlinetraining.tsl.texas.gov>



Review your signage—do you have more negative signage than positive? Consider replacing “Do Not” signs with positive language. http://www.paulwalsh.co/resources/view/SpeakingInThePositive#.VdN8A3t5_Dv



Consider a usability study of your website. See Steve Krug’s Rocket surgery made easy : the do-it-yourself guide to finding and fixing usability problems as a starting point.



Find the person at the school district who is “library friendly” – the librarian, an English teacher, or PTO president – invite them to lunch or for cookies after school. Pick their brain and find ways to work with the district.



Volunteer to work school sport events (ticket taker, concession stands, etc.) and wear a library T-shirt or your name tag.



Here are my ideas

