



Save Illinois Libraries

Last Wednesday, January 20, the Illinois library community banded together as never before to press the government to release funds due to library systems. The call to action read something like....

"Illinois' Library Systems need your help! No money has been received since June 2009. Go to www.saveillinoislibraries.com. An easy-to-use form is available to send emails to Comptroller Hynes and Governor Quinn asking them to release the money for library systems."

Across Illinois, news stories and press releases talked about the effort. Here are a few...

Could Library Book Sharing be in Jeopardy?

http://www.wics.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wics_vid_1355.shtml

Librarians Say Services in Jeopardy Without State Funding

<http://centralillinoisproud.com/content/fulltext/?cid=95041>

Every library system and every library in Illinois did their part to make our voice be heard loud and clear in Springfield. This unprecedented effort took a huge amount of organization and was lead by Sarah Long, the visionary Executive Director of North Suburban Library System.

Our goal was for 6,000 emails to be sent in one day. By 3:30 p.m., more than 6,700 library supporters had sent 13,519 emails and made at least 1,000 faxes and phone calls. By the next morning, more than 18,000 emails had been received by the Governor and the Comptroller!

Our efforts paid off, and we received our August 2009 payments the very next day on Thursday, January 21, 2010. I personally was amazed that Governor Quinn and Comptroller Hynes responded so quickly. However, I was not surprised that our membership and customers stepped forward to push our cause. Thousands of emails were sent; countless phone calls were made; an author and avatar even donated \$1,600 to ALS to say thanks for our leadership in the virtual world of Second Life. However, what really moved me to tears were all of the spouses, families, and friends of ALS staff who stood behind us all day, supporting and encouraging us as we rode an emotional roller coaster all the way to success. We are not out of the woods yet, but we are moving in the right direction.

So, what did we learn?

- Teamwork really is effective, especially when you have Sarah in the lead!
- Detailed planning, the kind we do so very well, is essential.
- The message must be focused and **very** simple.
- Know the target audience of your message. In our case, it was two-fold: library supporters (to help spread the final message) and, in the very end, two powerful people.
- In a crisis, you learn who your friends *really* are (e.g. avatars in Second Life, Caterpillar executives who appreciate their library service).
- It's all about community, and it's all about passion!

I am sure there will be many more battle cries as we dig our way out of this recession, but the good news for library land is that we can and we will! Have a great week!

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