

Advocating for Collections Care

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With thanks to Michael Norris, Chief Strategy Officer at the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance

What is Advocacy?

Definition: Support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.

Origin: Medieval Latin: to summon or call to one's aid

Preservation vs. Conservation

Conservation

- Physical treatment
- Strengthen
- Repair
- Stabilize



Preservation

- Collections care
- Stabilize
- Maintain
- Slow deterioration



Understanding Different Types of Value

- ❖ Intellectual (content)
 - Evidentiary
 - Informational
- ❖ Intrinsic
- ❖ Administrative
- ❖ Aesthetic
- ❖ Legal
- ❖ Historic (age)
- ❖ Rarity
- ❖ Commemorative
- ❖ Monetary





Internal Advocacy

For what are
we
advocating?

❖ Funds

❖ Time

❖ People

❖ Support, authority

Why do we
have to
make the
case?

It's our responsibility as
collection stewards!



Why do
WE have
to make the
case?

- Perhaps not as “sexy” or exciting as other institutional functions like exhibitions
- Often behind the scenes
- Impacts are longer-term – there may be more immediate fires to put out
- Donor considerations



Mission Statement:

❖ Collect

❖ Preserve

❖ Disseminate

“Chester County Historical Society is a not-for-profit educational institution whose mission is to promote an understanding of the history of Chester County and southeastern Pennsylvania by collecting, **preserving**, exhibiting and interpreting that history and its relationship to the region, and nation beyond, to audiences of all ages and interests.”

“Since 1905, West Virginia Archives and History has been charged with the responsibility of collecting and **preserving** West Virginia's public records and historical materials and making these materials available to the public.”

“The DePaul University Art Museum extends the institution’s commitments to excellence, diversity and social concerns through innovative exhibitions, programs, and events that analyze the variety and depth of artistic expression. The Museum acquires, **preserves** and displays the University’s diverse and growing collection of works of art.”

Institutional Strategic Plan

- To “adopt proactive preventive conservation as a standard practice.”
 - “Develop and implement collections policies and procedures.”
 - “Develop emergency procedures and responsibilities for site, staff and visitors.”
 - “Develop a preservation plan for the House.”
- To “establish short-term and long-term preservation and conservation strategies for the [site] and [collections].”
 - “Strategy 1: Establish protective procedures to minimize damage to permanent installations (Q2 2012 – Q4 2013)
 - “Strategy 2: Develop a conservation and preservation plan (Q2 2012 – Q2 2013)
 - “Strategy 3: Protect [the] main site and [collections] (Q3 2012 – Q4 2012)”

Preservation Plan

F.A.3 Strategy: Obtain a collections survey from a photograph conservator for the Religious News Service Photographs. Embark on digitization and post-digitization housing initiatives, and subsequent disposition of originals when necessary.

Desired Outcome: 68,000 prints, negatives (the majority cellulose acetate), and caption sets, which are presently housed together in acidic envelopes, are safely transferred and rehoused.

Resources Needed: Funding from an NEH Foundations Grant, associated resources, staff time.

Staff Lead for Implementation	Impact	Feasibility	Feasibility/Impact Rating	Priority	Timeline
Preservation Archivist	4	3	12	Medium	2017 and ongoing
Stakeholders/Collaborators:					
Director of Programs and Services; Reformatting Technician; Executive Director; Development and Communications Coordinator					

	1 Not Helpful	2	3	4	5 Very Helpful
It raised awareness of collection needs	0%	0%	5%	20%	75%
It helped with organization of projects to improve collections stewardship	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%
It resulted in increased internal funding allocations for preservation	5.3%	10.5%	36.8%	10.5%	36.8%
It supported efforts to solicit funds for recommended preservation or conservation projects	0%	0%	10.5%	21.1%	68.4%

Stakeholder Analysis

Who is your audience?

- ❖ Are they change-makers (primary) or influencers of change-makers (secondary)?
- ❖ What is their current position, and what stakes do they hold?
- ❖ How best to reach them?
- ❖ Internal politics – understand relationships, timing





Communication Plan

“Good communication cuts through the clutter, it doesn’t add to it. It does this by getting the **right message** in the **right medium** delivered by the **right messengers**, to the **right audience**.”

From Now Hear This: The Nine Laws of Successful Advocacy Communications. Fenton Communications, 2001.

- ❖ Cost of Inaction Calculator
AVPreserve
<https://coi.avpreserve.com/>
- ❖ Digitization Cost Calculator
Digital Library Federation Assessment
Interest Group's working group on
Cost Assessment
<http://dashboard.diglib.org/>
- ❖ Preservation Statistics Survey Report
American Library Association,
Association of Library Collections and
Technical Services, Preservation and
Reformatting Section
<http://www.ala.org/alcts/sites/ala.org.alcts/files/content/resources/preserv/presstats/FY2015/FY2015PreservationStatistics.pdf>



University of New Mexico Library

Compelling Stories

Data-driven:

- ❖ Economic impact
- ❖ Audiences served
- ❖ Outcomes achieved

Less tangible impacts:

- ❖ Knowledge gained
- ❖ Expression and recognition of community or group identity
- ❖ Engaging with historic and cultural collections teaches critical thinking – history helps contextualize and orient our current experiences
- ❖ Community enhancement



Specific Goals and Outcomes

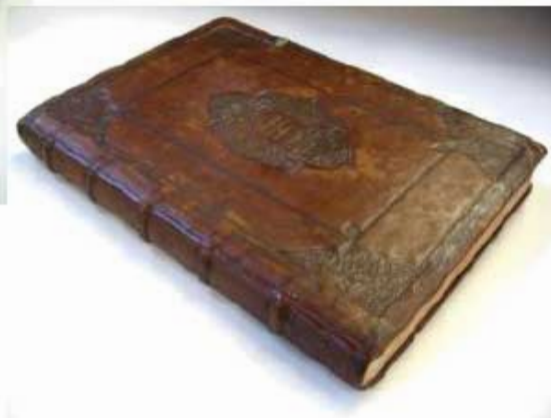
- ❖ Funds
- ❖ Time
- ❖ People
- ❖ Support, authority



Make friends!

- ❖ Cross-disciplinary, cross-departmental collaboration
- ❖ Presentations to and special events for the Board and other administration
- ❖ All-staff meetings
- ❖ Departmental or working group meetings
- ❖ Tours of collections storage
- ❖ Inter-office memos, newsletters, emails

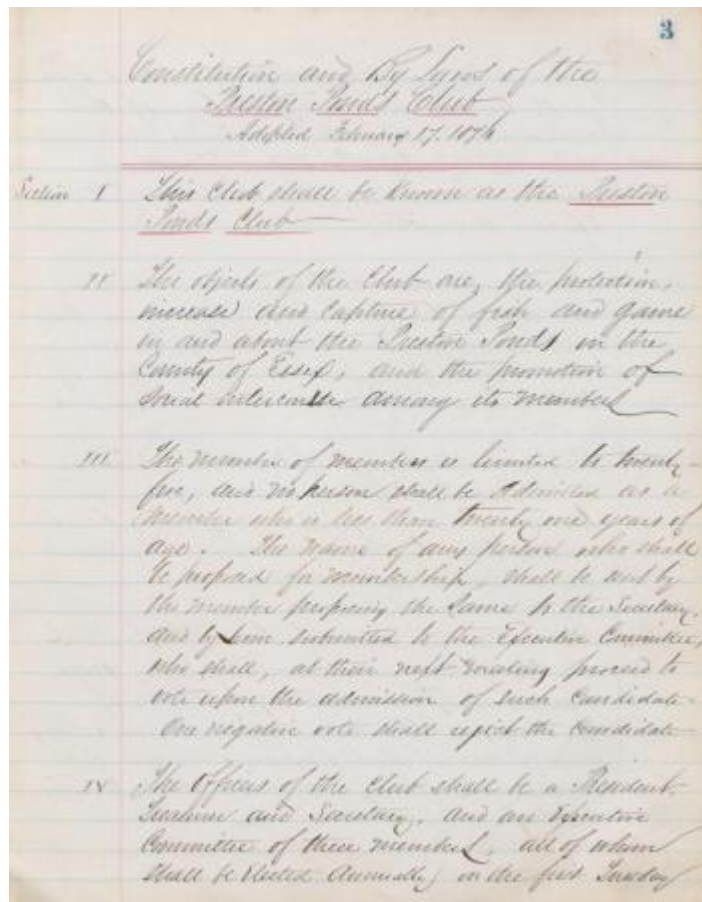






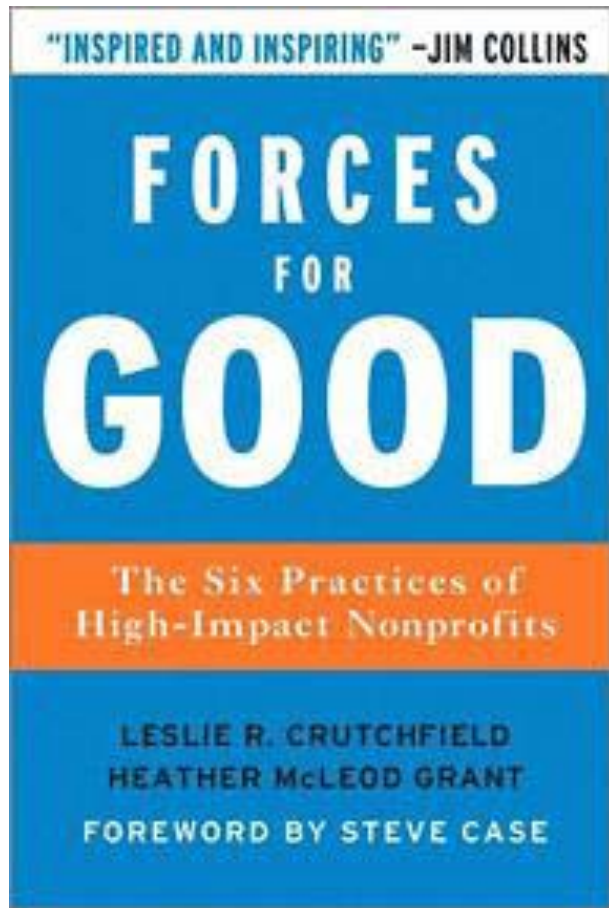
External Advocacy

Deciding to Advocate



“We’re nonprofit—
we’re not allowed
to advocate.”

Deciding to Advocate



“The best nonprofits both advocate and serve.”

--Crutchfield/Grant

Deciding to Advocate



What You Can Do:

- Educate/inform elected officials
- Support/oppose policies that affect your organization or industry

Deciding to Advocate



What You Can't Do:

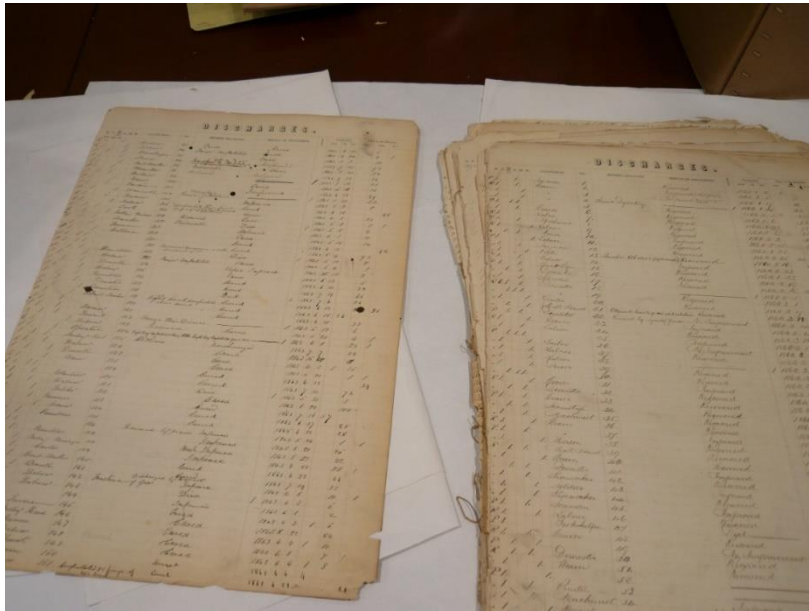
- Endorse candidates
- Make campaign contributions

Honing Your Advocacy Message



Honing Your Advocacy Message

= Impact



Data

Relevance =



Stories

Delivering Your Advocacy Message



Delivering Your Advocacy Message



Don't be the only messenger!

Delivering Your Advocacy Message

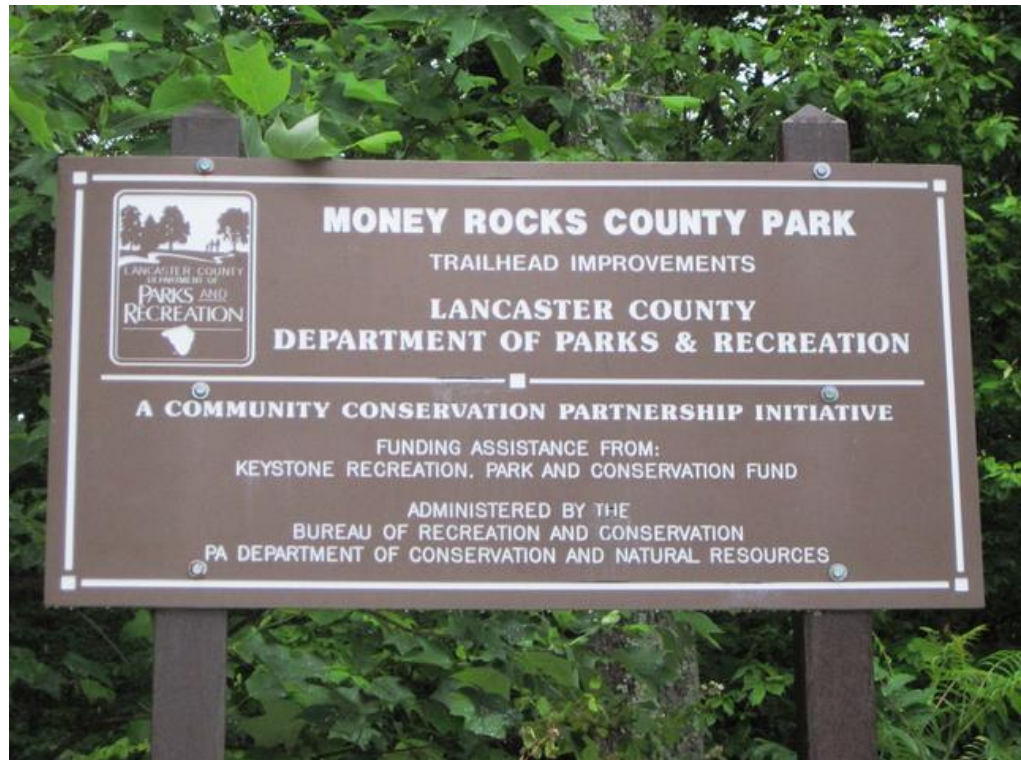


Allies and Champions:

- Board Members
- Patrons/Donors
- Teachers/Students
- Community Partners

Delivering Your Advocacy Message

Follow the money!



Useful Tips



Useful Tip #1



Cultivate and
Steward

Useful Tip #2

Staffers are
your new BFFs



Useful Tip #3



Never underestimate the power of a photo opp



Useful Tip #4

Gifts:
not worth
the trouble!



Useful Tip #5



The Actual Visit:

- Assign roles and rehearse
- Have a specific ask!
- Follow up

Useful Tip #6

Leave-behinds:

Less is more



Resources

- ❖ American Alliance of Museums advocacy resources
<http://www.aam-us.org/advocacy>
- ❖ Morgan, Elizabeth. *Delivering Value for Money: why and how institutional archives should market themselves to their internal publics*. University College London, 2010.
<https://www.history.org.uk/files/download/9148/1317202347>
- ❖ CCAHA's Save Pennsylvania's Past Collections Advocacy Toolkit
https://ccaha.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2018-07/Save%20PAs%20Past%20Summary_.pdf
- ❖ *Capitalize on Collections Care*. Heritage Preservation and the Institute of Museum & Library Services, 2007.
https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/caponcc_0.pdf
- ❖ SAA advocacy resources
<https://www2.archivists.org/advocacy>

Questions?

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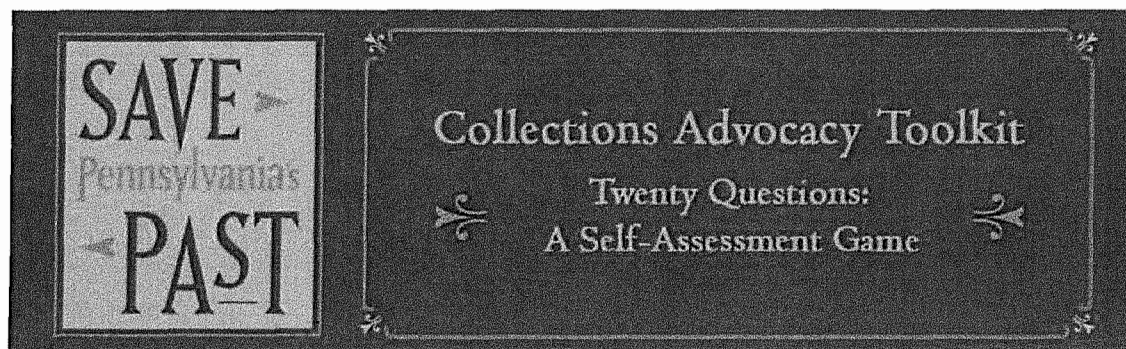
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Twenty Questions: A Self-Assessment Game

This questionnaire will help you describe your collections and how they serve the interests of your visitors and supporters. Add to or change the questions to suit your institution, then answer the selected questions in one or two sentences or phrases with other staff.

Try the same exercise with directors, trustees, donors, long-term members, and casual visitors. Continue to do this regularly over time until you see repeating responses.

The answers should reveal how others see what you do, how well you do it, and how it impacts them. They will provide ideas and phrases for articulating key messages before you begin advocating for your collections.

1. What do you collect?

2. What individual(s), event(s), or historical era(s) do your collections represent?

3. How do these collections fit into local, regional, national, and world contexts?

4. How do these artifacts illuminate a significant aspect of art or history?

5. What is unique or extraordinary about your collections?

6. How would you describe your site and these collections to someone who doesn't usually visit museums, historic sites, and other collecting institutions?

7. How do these collections impact your visitors?

8. Who are your core audiences?

9. How do your collections, exhibits, and programs serve your core audiences?

10. How do you go about discovering how you are serving your audiences?

11. What do you think about or see differently after interacting with your audiences?

12. How do you engage your audiences?

13. How would you describe the physical condition of the artifacts in your collections?

14. What plans do you have for improving the environment and long-term care of the collections?

15. What exhibits or programs have you developed to highlight preservation of the collections?

16. In what ways is your organization, site, or collection distinct from others in your area?

17. Do you collaborate or partner with institutions that complement yours?

18. What initiatives, coalitions, or partnerships have you joined or do you plan to join?

19. If you could carry out your complete vision, what would your institution, collections, and visitors look like in a decade or two?

20. What would be lost if your institution no longer existed?

Advocacy

IN THIS SECTION



Complete Your Economic Impact Statement

Now more than ever, legislators and funders need to know just how your museum impacts your community. You can start with a just few key pieces of data to personalize and complete our basic template. Then get creative – you can put the data on your museum or organization's letterhead, add photos of visitors enjoying the museum, or add additional data that helps make the case about the value of your museum in your community.

Many museums and organizations have created an Economic Impact Statement for their museum or several museums they represent. See these [samples](#).

You can also use our [template letter](#) to share your museum's economic impact with your members of Congress, with just a few clicks.

Basic Template

ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT for [Name of Your Institution]

My museum employs ____ (#) people in our community.

My museum spends \$ ____ annual budget each year on goods and services in our community.

My museum serves ____ (#) visitors each year, including % from out of town.

My museum serves ____ (#) schoolchildren each year through school visits to museums.

Admission fee: \$ ____

On a national scale, museums are economic engines:

- Museums employ more than 400,000 Americans.
- Museums directly contribute \$21 billion to the U.S. economy each year. They generate billions more through indirect spending by their visitors.
- 76% of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural or heritage activities. These travelers—including visitors to museums—spend 60% more on average than other leisure travelers.
- The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis has found that arts and cultural production constitute 4.2 percent of the nation's entire economy, a \$704 billion industry.
- The nonprofit arts and culture industry annually generates over \$135 billion in economic activity, supports more than 4.1 million full-time jobs and returns over \$22 billion in local, state and federal tax revenues.
- Museums and other cultural organizations return over five times as much in local, state, and federal tax revenue as they receive from all levels of government.

The American Alliance of Museums' mission is to champion museums and nurture excellence in partnership with our members and allies.

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Advocacy

IN THIS SECTION



Complete Your Educational Impact Statement

Now more than ever, legislators and funders need to know just how your museum impacts your community. Let your legislators know that museums are critical partners in education. You can start with a just few key pieces of information to personalize and complete our basic template. Then get creative – add your museum or organization's letterhead, add photos of students participating in programs at the museum, or add additional data that helps make the case about the educational mission of your museum.

See [samples](#) from across the field.

Basic Template

EDUCATIONAL IMPACT STATEMENT for name of institution

Amount spent by museum on educational programming: \$_____

Number of schools participating in class trips: _____

Number of visits by schoolchildren each year: _____

School Districts Served: _____

List of schools participating in class trips: _____

Curriculum topics taught in cooperation with local school system: _____

Admission fee, if any: \$_____

Number of educators that participated in teacher training programs: _____

In your own words: [Do you have letters from visitors that capture the educational value of your museums (from schoolchildren, teachers, veterans, families with special-needs children, seniors, or

from someone who pursued an education or a professional career after being inspired at your museum)?)]

On a national scale, museums are essential partners in education:

- Museums spend more than \$2.2 billion a year on education, 3/4 of which is typically spent on K-12 students.
- Museums receive approximately 55 million visits each year from students in school groups.
- A randomized study of students chosen for a half-day museum field trip found that they scored higher than peers in measures of critical thinking, historical empathy, and tolerance. For students from rural or high-poverty regions, the increase was even more significant (Education Next, *The Educational Value of Field Trips*, 2014).
- Museums tailor educational programs in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies, often in coordination with state and local curriculum standards (IMLS study).
- At a time when elected leaders are trying to advance scientific literacy and compete globally in all sectors, museums are sparking the next generation of scientists, artists, political leaders, historians, and entrepreneurs.
- Teachers, students, and researchers benefit from access to trustworthy information through online collections and exhibits, although most museums need more help in developing their digital collections to meet this need.
- Americans view museums as one of the most important resources for educating our children and as one of the most trustworthy sources of objective information. According to a study by Indiana University, museums are considered a more reliable source of historical information than books, teachers, or even personal accounts by grandparents or other relatives.

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