



GOING UP ALL FLOORS: ABOUT MY LIBRARY

A LIA's Queensland State Manager Jane Orbell-Smith says you should never get in the lift without your 'elevator speech' rehearsed and ready. Who knows when you might next have two precious minutes with a key stakeholder?

Imagine you have just caught up with your organisation's CEO in the elevator, what do you say? Will you make conversation about the weather? No, use the opportunity to promote your library or information service!

An elevator speech is a brief talk you have carefully prepared to promote your library (or yourself) to those who can influence and support your service.

At a Medical Library Association disaster training session titled A Seat at the Table, one of the tips the presenters gave was for each participant to develop a great elevator speech ready to reel off whenever an opportunity arises. By taking those opportunities you will have put yourself forward and made yourself known with those of influence before a disaster occurs and ensured they have some knowledge of your service's capabilities and capacity.

A quick search on Google brought 240,000 entries on the topic – that being the case, there must be something in it. So why not take the time and develop your own? If nothing else, you will have developed a decent conversation starter so you can avoid staring at the lift floor feeling awkward.

Let's unpack the steps. First, you need to know your topic – who knows better about your library or yourself? Try stepping back and examining your service as if you had no concept of why it exists. Use this to build a brief story of your library, what makes it different, whom do you serve, the difference it makes to the organisation and its clients.

By citing outcomes and economic value you are clearly demonstrating the economic worth of your library and information service. You may have to chase some of this information but it is worth it, especially when you are communicating with those responsible for the overall running of your organisation.

Get your audience involved – nodding or saying yes in agreement to your statements is a good indicator that you have their attention. Make sure you highlight the most important facts you want your audience to have as their take away message. Include a follow up – offer to send some information so there's a reason to reinforce your message by email or with useful information.

Rehearsing may seem strange but it gives you the opportunity to practice and smooth out any glitches. It also enables you to become comfortable with the speech's content and how you will present it. You certainly don't want to appear wooden or as though you are reading from a script.

Remember to adjust your speech to your audience; you wouldn't for example, give the same talk to the CEO as you would the organisation's financial administrator human resources manager.

Well, what do you think? It shouldn't be too hard for you to come up with your own elevator speech, who knows, it might even mean a promotion!

JANE ORBELL-SMITH AALIA (CP)

Librarian for HCare, Queensland Health
ALIA Queensland State Manager
jane.orbell-smith@health.qld.gov.au

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- Know your topic.
- Decide what is important and needs to be said.
- Target information to your audience.
- Demonstrate how you make a difference.
- Cite outcomes and where possible economic value.
- Keep it short and ...
- Rehearse!