

**International Council of Archives
Section of Records Management and Archives Associations**

**ADVOCACY AND PROMOTION STRATEGIES FOR
PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

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1. Introduction

In July 2000 the ICA Section of Records Management and Archival Professional Associations published a paper on *Lobbying and Public Campaigns for Professional Archival Associations*, which provided guidelines on how “to influence events or a decision and to solicit support for archives and archivists”. It was noted in the introduction to that paper that most associations have as one of their objectives “representing and promoting the profession”, with lobbying and public campaigns being one set of activities which support this goal, and advocacy or promotion of archives the other.

This paper covers advocacy and promotion activities and complements the strategies presented in the paper *Lobbying and Public Campaigns for Professional Archival Associations*. It examines the scope of possible advocacy and promotion activities, discusses the importance of planning, both at a strategic level and undertaking individual activities, provides a list of suggested strategies and possible activities that could be carried out to achieve the strategies.

2. Scope of advocacy and promotional activities

In a broad sense advocacy and promotional activities in professional associations are carried out to:

- increase community awareness about archives and archivists;
- support the development and advancement of the archival profession, and
- improve communications and build cooperative alliances with kindred organisations, government, the public and business decision makers.

In practice advocacy activities generally target specific audiences the association may wish to influence, whereas, promotion is about taking a broad message to the widest audience possible.

The extent of advocacy and promotion activities, and the communication methods selected will depend on a number of factors, including:

- The level of resources available in the association eg whether the association depends entirely on volunteers or whether it has the resources to acquire skills or produce promotional tools.
- The structure of the association eg whether it is a national body speaking with one voice, or whether it is a national body which also operates at a regional level speaking with many voices. Whether there is an identified person or persons, or committee, who could take responsibility for advocacy and promotion activities in the association; whether there is an overall agreed strategy, with supporting action plans, or whether activities are carried out on an ad hoc basis.
- The level of community awareness that may exist. While archives in a general sense are valued in most communities, there is often little understanding of how the profession contributes to the selection and preservation of archives.

- The level of awareness that may exist in kindred associations, and with decision-makers about the work of archivists and the objectives of the association.

3. Planning an advocacy and promotion strategy

Planning is the key to delivering a successful advocacy and promotion strategy as it will ensure that activities are coordinated and directed at achieving the overall goals of the association. Planning supports the most efficient use of scarce association resources allowing a clear and shared understanding of the messages being communicated and the implementation program.

4. Steps in planning an advocacy and promotion activity

Steps in planning an advocacy and promotion activity could include:

- *Identifying advocacy and promotion goals and the target audience*
Any activity must commence with a good understanding of the goals and target audience, i.e. what are you trying to communicate and why, and to whom are you trying to communicate? These goals should complement the objectives of the association and its overall planning strategies. The goals may be long-term (eg develop an general understanding in the community about archives), or short-term (eg to set up a display stand at a Conference of a kindred association) and in some instances short-term goals may support longer term goals.
- *Identifying key advocacy and promotion messages and activities*
At an early stage in the planning cycle it is necessary to identify the key messages and activities keeping in mind the audience. In the first instance this may be a simple dot point list or headings, or brief statements.
- *Identifying how to deliver the advocacy and promotion messages and activities*
There are a wide variety of ways to deliver advocacy and promotion messages and activities ranging from print and web based publications to displays and providing speakers at seminars and workshops. The key is to assess and evaluate methods and chose the most appropriate.
- *Identify resources required to undertake advocacy and promotion activities*
Resources will impact on the type and scope of the activities that can be undertaken and include financial requirements and the capacity of the association's membership to contribute skills needed. There may be some scope for undertaking partnerships with kindred associations or to use products or tools already developed by other archival associations.
- *Create an action plan for carrying out advocacy and promotion activities*
An action plan will assist in carrying out the activity and includes milestones to be achieved, target dates and designating responsibilities.
- *Evaluating the outcome of advocacy and promotion activities*
Evaluation of the activity is an important step to undertake as it will assist with future planning and the allocation of an association's resources. Targeted and specific advocacy and promotion activities will be easier to evaluate than those that are broadly focused. Evaluation methods could include feedback

from the identified audience, or from members of the association involved in supporting and delivering the activity. An association could also develop a set of questions eg were the necessary resources (both financial and human) available, did the activity reach the identified audience, did the planning keep to time and milestone met, what difficulties were encountered?

5. Suggested strategies and supporting advocacy and promotion activities

Strategy	Audience	Activities
To create a general awareness, elicit support and foster an appreciation about archives and the archival profession in the general community.	- General public or broad community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publish brochures explaining archives, the profession and the association for community groups and send to identified groups, or place strategically at community venues. - Speak at community forums. Develop a set of speaker notes and PowerPoint slides to support these presentations. - Prepare feature articles and submit to the media. - Present seminars/ workshops with specific broad community appeal. - Publicise association events to a wider community audience, where they have a relevance to a broad audience. - Develop information packages to distribute at community events and venues. - Set up a portable promotional display unit to use at community events and venues. - Make submissions were appropriate on broad community issues where archival matters are relevant. - Establish a website for the association.

<p>To develop an ongoing relationship with government, specific community groups and business decision makers in order to promote an awareness and foster an appreciation about archives and the archival profession.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government - Community groups - Businesses - Other professionals eg accountants, lawyers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Establish a relationship with representatives of decision-making organisations and appoint a member to be a central communication point for developing and nurturing an ongoing relationship. -Publish a brochure for community, Government and business decision makers explaining archives, profession and the association. -Talk at other professions' conferences, and other general conferences that decision makers would attend and invite them to speak at the association's conference. - Place brochure about the association into other professions' conferences satchels. - Advertise and write articles in their publications, or publications they would read.
<p>To reach professionals who are not members of the association to promote and encourage membership.</p>	<p>-Archival professionals who are not members of the association.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Publish brochure explaining the benefits of membership of the association. -Arrange an information session for potential new members. -Write letters to potential members inviting them to join the association. - Appoint members of the association to establish personal contact with these potential members. - Add details of membership on the association's website, including membership forms and a list of benefits to be obtained from membership.

<p>To create an awareness with students about the possibility of a career in archives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students - Academics - Career Counsellors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with students, academics, and career counsellors and discuss opportunities. - Publish a brochure for students, academics and counsellors explaining archives, the profession and the association. - Address student groups. - Appoint an association member as a liaison officer for students wanting more information on the profession. - Establish a mentor scheme for students to encourage interest in the profession and the association. - Place information about following a career in archives on the association's website.
<p>Build cooperative alliances with kindred professional associations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kindred associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talk at other professions' conferences and invite them to speak at the association's conference. - Write for their newsletter/journal on topics of interest to both professions, and invite them to write for the association's publications. - Advertise in their publications. - Prepare a brochure about explaining the profession and the role of the association. - Place brochure about the association into other professions' conferences satchels. - Appoint an association liaison officer to support and nurture the relationship with kindred associations.

Bibliography

Elsie Freeman Finch ed., *Advocating Archives: An Introduction to Public Relations for Archivists*, The Society of American Archivists & The Scarecrow Press, Inc, Metuchen, 1994.

Professional Association websites:

American Society of Archivists

Association of Canadian Archivists

Society of Archivists (UK)