

Library Fundraising

Getting the Story!

BASIC INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES AND IDEAS

A couple of thoughts as you get ready to interview your patrons. First do not go into the conversation with a story already in your head! You might want to begin with a pre- interview. During the pre-interview you will want to let the patron know what you are doing, what you are looking for and why you are doing this project. Let them know how your library will use the stories (with their permission, of course). Be sure to have a release form with you.

The Interview

Preparation:

- Set up a time to meet for the “interview” - you may want to limit it to no more than 20-30 minutes.
- Be prompt.
- Prepare the interview space – it can be a place that is visible, yet quiet enough that you will not be disturbed. You might want to put a sign-up letting people know that an interview is in process.
- Have all your paperwork ready: release form, paper and pen, your camera, and recording device, if you are using it. Recording the conversation for note taking is advised; this gives you the opportunity to listen deeply. Let the patron know it is only for your note talking.
- Review any notes from your pre-interview.
- Review the list of interview questions beforehand.

The Interview:

- Ask open-ended questions, guide them, keep them focused on the library and avoid tangents.
- Be inquisitive, look for the story.
- Try not to read questions.
- Be conversational and friendly. Use encouraging statements: “tell me more about x”
- If not recording, be sure to take complete and detailed notes; ask patron to pause while you write a complete thought or quote; write in first person.

The Interview Conclusion:

- Thank the interviewee
- Be sure the release form is signed
- Take a good head shot
- Write up your interview within 24 hours! Use first person.
- Edit and review the narrative.
- Send final version to interviewee for approval

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SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Here are some sample questions you might want to have on hand to get you started and help uncover that a compelling story:

- What 3 things about your library influenced you?
- How has the library changed or impacted your life?
- How did things change for you?
- Tell me about your visits to the library today, what do you do while you are here, what services do you use?
- What have you gotten/achieved/accomplished by using the library?
- Tell me about some of your earliest memories of being in a library?
- How have you or others benefitted from taking advantage of library services?
- What would you tell other people about the library that they don't know about?
- What do you value most about the library? Why?
- Do you regularly ask for advice or reference? If yes, why?
- What would your life be like if you didn't have access to the library?
- Tell me about the new skills or knowledge you have gained from the library.
- What one word would you use to describe your library?
- Complete this sentence: My library is because _____
- What else do you want to add about your experiences here at the library?
- Why should everyone have a library card?