

# The 10-minute guide to library campaigns

1. Over 10 % of UK libraries are currently under threat – over 500 out of a total UK public library provision of just over 4500
2. Library closures and cutbacks are determined by the local authority, but may be influenced by spending/funding restrictions imposed on them by central government.
3. The duty of a local council to provide a “comprehensive and efficient library service” is a legal obligation under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act. The Act also prohibits charging for book loans.
4. Some councils are suggesting that library services can be run by volunteers. This takes no account of the professional and ethical standards to which professional librarians must adhere, including data protection.
5. Contact your local councillor if your library service is under threat, to show your support and let them know about why libraries are important. Many councillors don't know about what libraries do and why they're vital services. You can also write to your MP.
6. If you need more information about libraries in your area, a Freedom of Information request can get you real data and statistics. You can find out more about FoI and make requests here: <http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/>
7. Many library supporters are forming local groups to protest cutbacks and closures. These often use Facebook or other social media as a central point for their campaign.
8. If you would like to start a petition, check your local council's regulations about how many signatures are needed for the petition to be discussed in Council and other requirements for the petition to be valid. Councils are now also required by law to provide an online petition function; check the council website for details. A read-in can be an effective, peaceful protest. See here for information about how to set one up
9. Your local librarians may be prohibited by the council from campaigning themselves – don't expect them to be able to start a campaign group. Also, because libraries are council property, they are not allowed to house a petition about council-related issues. You are allowed to petition outside libraries though!
10. Spread the word! The more people who know about proposed library cuts, the more chance we have of a fair, balanced review of provision. Good places to campaign are supermarkets, sports venues, community centres, and often schools are keen to help.

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Twitter: @UKpling  
Facebook: voicesforthelibrary  
[contact@voicesforthelibrary.org.uk](mailto:contact@voicesforthelibrary.org.uk)



**voices for the library**