**Writing a Letter to the Editor**

**[Created for libraries, but can be adapted by readers, local leaders, library-users, and supporters]**

Writing a letter to the editor is one of the most effective ways to call public attention to an issue like access to information that impacts everyone, whether it be a small weekly paper or a large, national newspaper. The following tips and sample letter can help you get started.

**Guidelines.** Before you start a letter, whether it’s to an online or print news outlet, be sure to consult their guidelines. Most outlets post guidelines on their websites on the same page as the “opinion” or “contact us” section.

* **Keep it short.** Letters should be substantive and concise, typically 150 to 200 words. Often, the smaller the news outlet, the larger the word count accepted.
  + **Introduce the issue and why you are writing the letter**. If you are responding to what someone else has written, directly address that article or letter.
  + **State the facts using statistics, preferably local, but local stories are most effective.** If you do not have statistics, cite a local story. If you do use statistics, use them sparingly. Metrics are important, but stories inspire.
  + **Close with a call to action or offer a solution to the problem.**
* **Make it timely.** Letters are typically in response to a recent article or a current event and the eBooksForAll issue is such an occasion. This shows that you are not only passionate about libraries – you are an active part of an ongoing public conversation about concerns relevant to your community.
* **Be original.** Feel free to use the ALA sample below, but put it in your own words. Speak from your own insight or experience, which is most compelling to editors, who can easily detect “canned” messages. Also, don’t send the same letter to different news outlets. Each letter you submit should be unique.
* **Pay attention to email details.**
  + Use a clear and compelling subject line.
  + Do not send attachments by email – only send text.
  + Always include your telephone number and address so that an editor can verify you as the author.
  + Do not cc: your letter to ALA or any other organization or individual. If you want someone else to see your letter, email them separately.
* **Enlist other advocates.** Multiply the impact of your letter by:
  + Sharing it on social media, being sure to use key hashtags, including #eBooksForAll, and handles like @MacmillanUSA and @ALALibrary.
  + Asking as many of your friends as possible to comment on your letter at the news outlet’s website.
* **Every letter to the editor makes an impact, even if it’s not published.** The more feedback a news outlet receives on libraries and eBooks, the higher priority the issue takes on for news editors, who decide what stories to cover, and the paper’s editorial board, who decides whether the news outlet will publish its own position on the issue.

**Letter to the Editor Template**

*In response to recent coverage of Macmillan Publishers eBook embargo for libraries, it’s important to recognize the impact on libraries like ours, which serves [insert number] people in our community.*

*Digital content is fast becoming the preferred - or only - access to books for many readers. Just last year, we had [insert number] of downloads, and we’re going to exceed that number by at least [insert %] in 2019. A single copy of a new title in eBook format for a period of two months is not sufficient nor is it acceptable. In some instances, this embargo will force readers to wait a year or more to borrow an eBook.*

*More than 160,000 readers have already signed the #eBooksForAll campaign petition  to urge Macmillan to reverse their new policy.  Visit ebooksforall.org to ensure access to information and content for all here in [insert town/city name].*

*Libraries bring together authors, publishers, teachers, and readers for the purpose of boosting knowledge, creativity, literacy, ideas, and imagination.  We need more people reading, not barriers that limit access.*

#  #  #