

How to Conduct a Virtual Library Tour



Here are the steps you'll need to host a successful virtual library tour!



1. SCHEDULE THE VIRTUAL VISIT.

- You can find the website links and contact information for your federal, state and local elected officials utilizing [ALA's Action Center](#).
- Send an email to the legislator using the provided website contact form or email address. In your email, be sure to confirm that you are a constituent, mention the name of your library, and briefly describe the purpose of the virtual library tour.
- Decide if the virtual tour is something you want to be recorded. If so, you will need to ask for consent from the staff beforehand, and be clear on how you will utilize the footage.
- Follow up as needed until a date and time are finalized. Once finalized, confirm who will be hosting the virtual meeting. The legislator's office may have a preferred platform. If you will be hosting, send a calendar invitation to the office with the appropriate link.

• SAMPLE E-MAIL:

*My name is _____, and I am a librarian at the (**Library Name**). As a constituent, I am writing to invite you to join me for a virtual tour of our library. While the pandemic has put constraints on us, we have pivoted to provide services even when our doors have been closed. We would like to share our work with you as well as what we have learned about our community's needs and how we can continue to address them, during the pandemic and beyond. We would be pleased to host you for a 15-minute virtual tour at a time that works best for you, using your preferred online meeting platform. With your consent, we also would like to record our virtual visit and share highlights with our patrons on our website and social media.*

*Thank you for your consideration. I can be reached at (**provide contact information**).*

2. PREPARE FOR THE TOUR.

Content:

Create a script or outline to ensure that you are staying on task during the virtual tour.

- Introduce yourself, the library, what you do.
- Thank the legislator/their staff for their time.
- Show them around, highlighting strategic people, programs and places that will appeal to your VIP visitor, including:
 - Other staff (showing the job opportunities/human face/dedication to your library)
 - Projects that are supported by IMLS and other funding sources
 - Sections of your library that might be of interest to your elected leader, depending on their background: makerspace, early literacy programs, job assistance center, etc.

Content (Continued):

Repeat the core message of the visit: the desire for collaboration and the need for continued resources for libraries.

- Allow legislator/their staff to ask any questions.
- Offer the legislator your library's resources – physical space for town hall meetings, research assistance, etc. – if your library can be of service to them, their staff, or their constituents.
- Thank them again, and remind them that you would love to continue working together to address the community's needs through strong library services, throughout the pandemic and beyond.

Do a practice run beforehand!

- Familiarize yourself with the key messages.
- How does the video look? How is the lighting, the sound? Is there any background noise that can be eliminated? How is the internet connection?

Logistics:

Decide who will host the tour.

- If you are hosting the virtual tour, what online platform will you be using (ie. Zoom, Google Meet, etc.)? Familiarize yourself with the legislator's preferred platform.

Important things to consider:

- Be sure to have a backup plan in case you experience any technical difficulties (another staff person on standby, or another platform to migrate to).
- Who will conduct the tour? Will any other library staff members be present? Do your staff members reflect the diversity of your community?
- **What are the main areas you would like to show to the legislator/their staff, and why? How will these resonate with the legislator and highlight what your library provides for the community?**
- Remember to keep the tour brief (aim for no more than 10-15 minutes, with time for questions).
- What do you know about your legislator? **Research them before the visit.** How have they supported your library or libraries? What are their main interests? What is their alma mater? Make the visit personal.

3. HOST THE VIRTUAL TOUR.

4. SAY THANK YOU.

- Send a thank you email to the legislator and their staff shortly after the visit, and be sure to include any helpful resources about your library (website link, one-pager, etc.) so that their office can follow up with you.
- **Contact ALA's PPA office and [let us know how it went!](#)**

 **Tweet thanks to your elected official after the tour, tagging them and [@LibraryPolicy!](#)**