



LIBRARIES ON THE AGENDA – AN IMPORTANT POINT FOR THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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Abstract

The article is about the importance of placing libraries on the agenda of governments and decision-making bodies at different levels. It also discusses the roles libraries have for influencing decisions at the regional and national levels. At the national level, there is a better chance to place libraries on the agenda when libraries are linked to specific information society topics. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process explained that access to information and knowledge is an important component of a truly inclusive Information Society and that libraries can play an important role in this process. Advocacy for libraries at the local level is the daily task for many library directors at local government level, at university level or inside an institution. There are often different University governing officials and bodies; and other boards, councils and authorities which have to be convinced of the importance and abilities of libraries, to help in achieving their own success. Focussing on the role libraries can play for the successful evaluation of a university can be an excellent way to place the library on the agenda. Another important element in placing libraries on the agenda in our society is the librarian himself. But one thing is certain: the higher the professional level of a librarian, the better the advocacy work can be done. It is also important to create pictures in the hearts of our politicians and administrators so that they can support funding of libraries.

Keywords: Libraries. Adovacy. Society Information. Political governments.

BIBLIOTECAS NA AGENDA: UM A QUESTÃO IMPORTANTE PARA A SOCIEDADE CONTEMPORÂNEA

Resumo

Discussão sobre a importância da introdução da biblioteca na agenda governamental e nos órgãos de decisão em diferentes níveis. Também é discutido o papel das bibliotecas em influenciar as decisões nos níveis regionais e nacionais. No nível nacional, há uma melhor chance de introduzi-las na agenda, quando as mesmas estiverem vinculadas aos tópicos específicos da Sociedade da Informação. A Conferência Mundial sobre a Sociedade da Informação (WSIS) explicou que o acesso à informação e ao conhecimento é um fator importante em uma sociedade verdadeiramente inclusiva e que as bibliotecas podem ter um papel importante neste processo. A sua representação em nível local é a tarefa diária de vários diretores de bibliotecas governamentais, nas universidades ou de qualquer instituição. Sempre há diferentes diretorias e órgãos de Universidade; e outras diretorias, conselhos e autoridades que devem ser convencidas da importância e competência das bibliotecas, para que auxiliem o seu próprio sucesso. Um excelente caminho para a introdução da biblioteca na agenda pode ser o de enfatizar o papel que a mesma pode ter para uma avaliação institucional positiva. Um outro elemento importante para esta introdução na nossa sociedade é o próprio bibliotecário. Mas, uma coisa é certa: quanto maior for o nível profissional do bibliotecário, melhor pode ser o seu trabalho representativo. Também é importante criar imagens positivas nos corações dos políticos e administradores para que eles possam aportar e destinar recursos públicos para as bibliotecas.

Palavras-chaves: Bibliotecas. Sociedade da Informação. Políticas Públicas



INTRODUCTION

The topic I have chosen as focal point for the term of my IFLA presidency is to enable us all in as many ways as possible to place libraries on the agendas of governments and decision-making bodies at different levels. To focus our work, the following questions must be considered:

- Where should we target our activities to place libraries on the agenda? Should this be regionally differentiated?
- Which topics are most relevant and promise the greatest success for us? (as individual libraries, as national associations)
- What lobbying and advocacy methods have already proven successful?
- What is the profile of the effective and successful advocator?
- How can individual librarians educate themselves and others to carry out this advocacy work?

The answers to these questions must be set into the context of the following levels of decision-making bodies:

1.1 Advocacy at government or state, at a national level, including the role of the national library associations.

• What roles do libraries have for influencing decisions at the regional and national levels?

This affects not only information policy decisions, library and information legislation, financial and funding policies for libraries, but also information issues concerning electronic information, access to information, use of information, etc. In addition, since decisions at this upper governmental level dynamically and synergistically influence the policy standing, viewpoints and decisions in neighbouring countries. Hence, advocacy at this level is doubly important to achieve global acceptance of the values and policies libraries represent. Cooperation here among the national associations in IFLA is extremely important.

Governments of different levels develop programs for their future policy. This provides possibilities to place libraries on their agenda and into their plans and programs. This is often a process of long and sustainable advocacy work of librarians.

On the state level, the library association and the national library can work together to analyze plans and programs. This is not only important in the cultural department or ministry, but also in many other departments. At the national level, there is a better chance to place libraries on the agenda when libraries are linked to specific information society topics.



Are there examples for this method? of advocacy?

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was a very important event which IFLA has used for its advocacy policy. In the Report of the Geneva Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society from December 2003 libraries were mentioned in connection with the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, the access to information and knowledge and in the action plans. (http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itus/md/03/wsis/doc/S03-WSIS-DOC-0009!R1!MSW-E.doc Accessed 20. 12. 2007)

In disadvantaged areas, the establishment of ICT public access points in places such as post offices, schools, libraries and archives, can provide effective means for ensuring universal access to the infrastructure and services of the Information Society.[...] Public institutions such as libraries and archives, museums, cultural collections and other community-based access points should be strengthened so as to promote the preservation of documentary records and free and equitable access to information (p 5).

The WSIS process explained that access to information and knowledge is an important component of a truly inclusive Information Society and that libraries can play an important role in this process. "We strive to promote universal access with equal opportunities for all to scientific knowledge and the creation and dissemination of scientific and technical information, including open access initiatives for scientific publishing" (p 5).

This WSIS document shows what role libraries can play to enable these goals. Therefore it is very important for national library associations to study these documents, to use its language to convince the government of the possibilities library can add to fulfill these programs.

After the Summit, the great opportunity of WSIS was used to place libraries on the agenda in some countries and regions – from Botswana to Malaysia to Slovakia. During my president- elect brainstorming session during the IFLA Congress in Seoul, Korea, 2006, the success story of the Slovakia National Library was presented by Dusan Katuscak. (Katuscak, Dusan: WSIS gave a boost to Library development in Slovakia, see http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla72/Programme2006.htm, Session Nr. 113; accessed 20. 12. 2007). The Slovakia National Library Association used WSIS ideas and suggestions and actions to instigate the installation of ICT in libraries to support the national library network.

But there are many more possibilities for libraries to use the World Summit of the Information Society in their advocacy work. One of the outcomes of the Summit after Tunis 2005 is the implementation by action lines. 10 WSIS action lines were presented:

- C1. The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development
- C2. Information and communication infrastructure
- C3. Access to information and knowledge
- C4. Capacity building



- C5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- C6. Enabling environment
- C7. ICT Applications: E-government, E-business, E-learning, E-health, E-employment, E-environment, E-agriculture, E-science
- C8. Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- C9. Media
- C10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society
- C11. International and regional cooperation

When reflecting on the tenor of these action lines, it is obvious that library can play a role in many of them. Taken into account that everything is very general and not very concrete, IFLA has analysed these action lines and provides ideas on how to use these actions lines to put libraries on the agenda in a document on the IFLA website entitled: 'Libraries and the WSIS Action Lines' (http://www.ifla.org/III/wsis.html). This document is a guideline for international, regional and local advocacy for libraries in relation to the implementation of the WSIS by Action Line 2005-2015. Written guidelines and best practices show how to use the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society for furthering the development of libraries. Unesco has taken up the role to follow up these action lines and has asked different Non-Governmental-Organizations (NGO) to support this process as moderators.

Action Line C 3 is Access to information and knowledge. IFLA is the moderator of the sub-theme Libraries and Archives. When the actions lines states that information communication and technology (ICT) allow people to access information and knowledge and how individuals, organizations and communities can benefit from this, IFLA explains that libraries are an existing and sustainable network close to users. Those libraries mainly serving as book circulation centres must be upgraded to the information society level to become 'hybrid libraries' offering relevant services in both physical and digital form. (Libraries and the WSIS Action Lines, p. 9)

1.2 Advocacy at the regional or provincial level

At the regional or provincial levels, regional library associations and other representatives of libraries can analyze government programs of this level. Very often libraries are left out – no matter if it is a program for telecenters or a program for education. Libraries are often not in the focus of those ministries at regional or provincial level and it is necessary to bring libraries into the consciousness of the decision-makers at this level.

The WSIS process underlines the importance of libraries not only in access to information and spreading ICT, but also in supporting the cultural and linguistic diversity. And the role libraries play in society is far beyond the cultural department of a region. This very often is the key problem. Other departments are not responsible for libraries and



naturally do not integrate them in their plans and programs. This is the task of regional library associations to take up and advocate for libraries. As librarians it is our task to intervene, if possible, or to explain to the responsible administration staff or the politicians what role libraries can play to support their programs. Our counterpart is not only the cultural or educational department, but it can also be the department responsible for telecommunication or for family and youth or a labour department.. In many countries and regions it is difficult to advocate across departments, but libraries, since they serve all clients, have a great opportunity to be successful with this. It is possible to place libraries on the agenda of regional and provincial programs for telecommunication, migration, small and media companies etc. Libraries are able to support these plans when they become part of the ICT strategy and build up a strong and competent work force.

What are the challenges to follow this line?

First of all we need good examples, so that we can prove what we say. We have a basis for this work already in several success databases concerning library and information policy achievements in IFLA and in the WSIS context. Plus, we have a myriad of successful advocators in our midst who have achieved great advancements for libraries, freedom of information values, open access, etc., in their countries or in international organizations. We have a strong basis to draw upon, but I see that this is a topic that can and must be strengthened for libraries and librarians in all parts of the world, and this is why I have chosen this topic for my presidential goal during the next two years.

For the regional and local level, IFLA members have collected many good examples in a Success Stories Database (http://fmp-web.unil.ch/IFLA/). Everybody is asked to contribute success stories to this database from all over the world. Tell your story and share it with other librarians. (http://www.ifla.org/III/wsis/announce02052005-e.html). These examples show the possibilities and development of libraries along the ICT development in different countries. And even if a library has not yet reached this stage, librarians can ask to be included in relevant programs. This is often the best possibility to get financial support.

1.3 Advocacy at the local level

a) Local communities

Advocacy for libraries at the local level is the daily task for many library directors at local government level, at university level or inside an institution.

The same aspects as described above are important for the local level, where public libraries are often much better connected to local administration and politics. Many public library directors are experienced in how to connect with local administration and politicians, even when they are not in the same party or group this person is representing. Public libraries are for all, they represent values nearly everybody wants to support. When their work is successful, they have a group of citizens standing behind them.

These citizens, the users of the public library, are an important alliance in our advocacy work. And it is those possible clients we want to serve in the future.



Are there E-Books these clients want to read? Are there talking books their readers listen to when driving to work by car? Are there new printed books for adults and children? Are there computers where clients can be trained for the modern information society? Are there library personnel able to use modern technology and to provide digital knowledge to their readers? Is there an online information desk to answer all questions readers might have?

To advocate for the inclusion in the information society at the local level means to ask for these developments, to be open and ready for them, and this cannot be done without advocating for a modern library.

b) In universities and other institutions

Putting the 'Libraries on the agenda' of the institution we serve is important for all academic and special libraries.

Advocacy at the institutional level in which a library is embedded include the following aspects: How can libraries play a greater role in the institutional structures and governance of the institutions and the specific constituency they serve? Especially in this area, libraries are not always included in the planning and budgetary processes nor in institutional policy decisions. Hence, libraries and librarians need to be able to place library and information policy interests at the level of institutional planning, policy-making and policy-enforcing activities. This means strengthening the role librarians play in such activities, their effectiveness in having their interests being heard and their support by key stakeholders, thus indirectly expanding their scope of influence and placing the library and information policy not only on the institutional agenda, but making it a driving force behind the institutional agenda, institutional policy and institutional goals. This area includes not only libraries in universities and other educational institutions, special libraries in research, government and other institutions, and even school libraries, but also those libraries and library services for special user groups, for specific media formats, etc.

There are often different University governing officials and bodies; and other boards, councils and authorities which have to be convinced of the importance and abilities of libraries, to help in achieving their own success. University and educational research funding agencies must be approached in a careful way to get support for the library. As the library serves all faculties, this can be successful – sometimes. Focussing on the role libraries can play for the successful evaluation of an university can be an excellent way to place the library on the agenda.

There are the same possibilities for special libraries, but it will be more difficult, as there are no students to show a high usage and support for the library. Therefore, an excellent service is the basis for successful advocacy work. And an excellent relationship with the governing bodies of the parent institution is crucial to its success.

Especially for these local levels in education and research Open Access to information is an important value to place libraries on the agenda of these institutions. Support for establishment and maintenance of Institutional Repository (and national





institutional repository network) including institutional and national mandates for submission of authored works can make the library as an important partner for high level decision makers in these institutions. Legislation and/or recommendations concerning consortial agreements for purchase, maintenance, digital preservation of and perpetual access to electronic information materials;

Adequate funding of library collections including electronic resources on an institutional level is an important goal to advocate for and find partners.

Often those institutions are full of people who compete with each other. In many cases, the library is serving them all – but the acknowledgement for the work the librarians do, does not come from all.

What is more often the case is that the programs are often discussed and planned without the library, and later the library is asked to serve the programs. To place libraries on the agenda of research institutions and get a good share of the research budget is a difficult advocacy task and has a lot to do with the competence and service the library is able to provide and the librarians can promise to their colleagues in the institution. The image of our service in the minds of our constituency down to the individual users and even the non-users is crucial, if we want to place libraries on the agenda.

This involves achieving a heightened degree of awareness of the value, services, and resources provided by the individual libraries and enhancing the image of the library as a powerful instrument. It is important to support the acknowledgement of the traditional book culture in libraries. But to survive in the future, this will not be enough. Libraries can not be just archives for 'old' material. Libraries are modern access points to the world's knowledge. To install ICT in Libraries is an important step to modernize libraries, but it is only one step. E-Books and licensed database are part of the next steps to be taken. This is the case in progress in most of the university libraries worldwide.

1.4 Advocacy for modern libraries in our profession often requires change in the image, work and self-understanding of the librarian!

Hence, the third key element in placing libraries on the agenda in our society is the librarian. The openness of librarians to modern information technology, to active service for their clients, and their ability to adapt to change are important and must be taken seriously. Empowering librarians at all levels to recognize the chances for advocacy and to know how to use them effectively to support and achieve these goals will be the key to successful advocacy.

The Librarians' role as advocators - How can we achieve the empowerment of librarians as social and intellectual leaders, as personalities capable of convincingly representing these values and presenting solutions to important policy-impacting issues? What is the profile of the successful library advocate? How can we attain the characteristics belonging to such a profile? Knowledge of what is available to us and what is potentially available to our constituents, our administrators, etc., is an invaluable asset for any advocacy strategies. Areas of advocacy for the individual librarians include too many different activities

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to mention them all. But one thing is certain: the higher the professional level of a librarian, the better the advocacy work can be done.

In pursuing the goal to place libraries on the agenda, what is the role of the librarians themselves? Librarians will not wait for the result of the advocacy measures within their library association. They need to stand up themselves. To talk directly to politicians about libraries on the agenda is sometimes more difficult, as in many countries librarians need formal introduction to these people. Sometimes there are social activities like exhibition openings where it is possible to talk to politicians directly. When preparing for such a talk, it is important to have one idea, one topic only which can place libraries on the internal agenda of this politician. And it is important to talk not only with persons in power, but also with the opposition in such a way that everybody feels comfortable or even the urgent necessity to work with the librarians. This is not easy and it is often only successful when libraries' activities and goals bring benefits to the persons in politics themselves – benefits in being reelected, in having a good public appearance, in opening new doors of opportunity, etc.

What is very helpful in this context is that libraries have a lot of values which are expressed in their services, such as

- education for all,
- life-long learning,
- maintaining the ideals of democracy and
- social inclusion.

For some politicians we have to combine these with the aspects of economic development or the better evaluation of an institution which the result of implementing our values will support. In addition, we have to cultivate strategic alliances with key bodies which have the same or similar values and often the same or related goals. From local social groups to related professions like authors and teachers there are important strategic alliances to be pursued. Alliances can be powerful advocacy tools within the parent institution or within the society structures outside the library. The focus of such strategic alliances could be any one or more of our key values of education, social inclusion, being a part of the information society.

This is not the place to list all our possible partners and foundations, supporters and helpers to place libraries on the agenda. This situation is different in each country and in each region. But it is important to work closely together with partners, but also while taking the lead as librarians. Strategic allies to approach for cooperation in this endeavour have to be analyzed carefully. But without allies and alliances there will be no success. From authors to publishers, from scientists to parents, they all are our allies – even if they have their own views and their methods of achieving them. Concentration on our common goals is the key to success with our allies and the key to maintaining effective strategic alliances.

When we focus on library fundamental funding, on ICT in libraries, we need to explain why this is useful for development. We need to give examples (from the success data base), especially those with a heart-rendering aspect. We have to create pictures in the hearts of our politicians and administrators – this is the way to convince them to support funding of libraries.



There are many advocacy methods on the web (some are cited at the end of this article). Advocacy methods which have already proven successful are dealing with a long-term relationship to people in administration and in public policy, well-prepared material on library success stories, well-informed and helpful librarians in the daily world and an excellent dedicated library service.

2 CONCLUSION

To follow the line of 'Library on the Agenda' is a very rewarding path. If you have not done it, it is worth a try. And it is important not to give up after the first attempts, if they are unsuccessful. Take 'Libraries on the Agenda' as a lifestyle program –wherever you are there is a chance to convince people about the value of modern libraries and library services, wherever you are, be active to exchange old pictures about libraries in the mind of your counterparts into new, exciting and dynamic (surprising)? ones. Talk about your goals, not about your situation. It will not take long until the reward comes back to you and to the library!

Each country has its own methods and experiences. For a truly international progress we need papers on advocacy methods which have been found to be successful, we need differentiations and adjustments for different cultural and social settings, best-practice examples, what to avoid, etc. This advocacy work – placing libraries on the agenda of our international, national, regional, institutional, and local community governing and policy-making bodies – can draw on the expertise and contributions of each librarian.

One of the outcomes of this work could be a guide to advocacy work at all of the above levels, and on the international level. This would include methods which have been found to be successful, differentiations and adjustments for different cultural and social settings, best-practice examples, what to avoid, and of course, a selection of success stories, etc. Each librarian has experience in his or her own area and we encourage you of all to come forth to share this expertise with us in achieving these goals by sending it to your IFLA president.

I am grateful to Diann Rusch-Pelz who has compiled some of the basic advocacy methods from Stephanie Vance and from the Johnson Center for Philanthropy and some other sources for you to study. These include:

2.1 Citations from Stephanie Vance

On the basis of her long-time work in advocation in libraries, Stephanie Vance (Vance, Stephanie: What makes a Successful Advocate? http://www.advocacyguru.com/staffsurvey.htm) has proposed several characteristics for the profile of the successful library advocator:



- Courage
- Foresight
- Creativity
- Ability to formulate concrete issues and speak to the point
- Ability to judge when to speak and when to stop
- Ability to judge whom to approach, when to approach, how to approach
- Good at building networks within the target bodies and identifying the key responsible persons to be approached
- Able to do one's "homework" on the issues and on the target bodies' policy up to present, while also being able to recognize when to use this information or not
- Able to collect details, assess them for their importance and know when to use them
- Able to present a convincing argument without attacking the other(s)' position, unless it is deemed necessary
- Able to separate the less important from the important
- Knowing how to achieve a win-win situation
- Knowing how to withdraw to avoid a rejection/refusal, before it comes to rejection/refusal so as to reorganize and restructure before another approach is taken.

Some of these might seem to be easily attainable and learnable, others take experience and long training: How and where can the average librarian attain such a profile? Some opportunities arise through

- Self-study of Guidelines and articles on advocacy
- Practice, Mentorship
- Working together with experienced advocators
- Reading reports of success stories and how they achieved their goals
- Continuing education in this area (i.e., IFLA may also present a CPD package in context of the "Libraries on the Agenda" program, see below)

• Librarian education and training programs

- Non-profit Good Practice Guide (2002) by the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy & Nonprofit Leadership of Grand Valley State University with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. See Website for non-profit organizations (www.npgoodpractice.org)
- Taking a course in leadership skills, even distance learning courses, i.e., at Grand Valley State University, Non-Profit Leadership Institute, at European Training



Institute (http://www.e-t-i.be/about.asp), or the Advocacy Institute (advocacy.org) — which conducts domestic and international advocacy leadership development programs designed to enable movements and organizations to set public agendas. This site includes downloadable training resources that address all stages of planning and executing an advocacy campaign. It features resources in strategy, media campaigns, and sustainability that contribute to making social justice leadership strategic, effective, and sustainable in pursuit of a just world. The Advocacy Institute offers a tutorial called ADKAR" - A Model for Change Management — which describes the Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement.

• Consulting Handbooks and Guides on Advocacy

2.2 Citations extracted from the Johnson Center for Philanthropy "Non-Profit Good Practice Guide" (cited above)

Build a grassroots advocacy system to impact public policy -- An effective grassroots advocacy system, with good communication and willing participants, is an essential part of building a constructive relationship with elected officials and having impact on public policy.

Be a helpful resource to elected officials regarding your area of expertise -- Establish yourself as a helpful and trustworthy resource is an effective means to creating a long-term relationship with elected officials and enhancing your ability to influence decisions on policy.

Know that urging the general public to join your advocacy efforts can be considered grassroots lobbying

Have a person in your organization who knows the basics of how a bill becomes law – this is a person experienced in the intricacies of how a bill becomes law in Congress or legislature such as a board member, volunteer or staff person can save time and resources.

Lobby for change in government regulations on behalf of your mission -- The regulatory process in the executive branch of government (president, governor, mayor) has tremendous impact on public policy and can provide a second chance at influencing a law passed by the legislature.

Lobby for change in funding in the legislative appropriations process --Legislative appropriations are a fundamental means of public policy making and are determined using a distinctive set of committees, processes and timelines.

Promote news stories, editorials, op-ed pieces, and letters to the editor in support of your position -- Press coverage in a targeted legislative district and supported with grassroots lobbying by influential members of your non-profit community, creates the best opportunity to have impact on a public policy issue.

Distinguish partisan vs. non-partisan activities

Recognize that in the public policy arena, there are no permanent victories -- Be



prepared to defend your hard-fought gains.

Understand that no one person can bring about an important policy change -- Being an effective lobbyist or advocate means being a team player.

Use an outside lobbyist as part of your advocacy campaign -- After you have created an internal public policy program

2.3 Do NOT

Do not try to convince a legislator of the merit of your cause without any support from the legislator's constituents -- Elected officials rely heavily on constituents for advice on policy, the essence of effective grassroots advocacy.

Do not meet an elected official for the first time when you need the official's help -- It is much more difficult to garner support from an elected official in the first meeting rather than after having established a relationship of trust and mutual assistance.

Do not limit your impact by not clearly distinguishing lobbying activities from advocacy activities -- Advocacy refers to any activity that attempts to change government policy, while lobbying is a subset of advocacy that aims to influence specific legislation, which means it is aimed at a legislative body.

Do not rely on an outside lobbyist for most of your advocacy activities -- Though outside lobbyists can be an important part of your team, they do not take the place of developing an active grassroots public policy program within your organization.

Be aware that mistakes can be made by:

Not having a comprehensive, balanced approach in your advocacy campaign is a big mistake -- Be careful not to rely too much on technical and policy expertise without establishing the sort of grassroots constituent support likely to move individual elected officials; at the other extreme, be careful not to rely only on grassroots constituent support without the technical and policy expertise needed to fashion strong arguments and win influential allies, such as editorial boards.

Failing to develop a "reservation position" that is accepted by all members of your coalition is another mistake -- If some groups want "more" than others, or are want to stake out "higher ground," this may be feasible, but within the coalition there needs to be an understanding of what ultimately everyone is willing to accept, at least privately.

Not realizing that many people would welcome being invited is a big mistake -- You will be surprised by the number of politically astute people interested in your cause who will gladly join your advocacy network, if asked.

Thanks again to Diann Rusch-Pelz for supporting me in preparing this article and for the following list of good reference materials for Libraries on the Agenda:

AVNER, Marcia. Lobbying and advocacy handbook for nonprofits organizations. 2002. (ISBN 0940069261)





KEY questions for developing an advocacy. Available at:

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< http://www.fenton.com/pages/5 resources/nowhearthis.htm>

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