

## Chapter 1 : Freebie Library OptIn Page

*Here is a highly readable guide to strategies and projects that have helped more than public libraries gain community support and funding during challenging times.*

Democracy is thriving at your community library Friday, Oct. So, what does democracy mean? Democracy, which derives from the Greek word demos, or people, is simplistically defined as government in which the power is vested in the people. In our country, we have a representative democracy wherein we elect officials to represent us in government. A representative democracy does not relieve us of our responsibility to be active within our communities. Over the past two centuries, our country has worked hard at developing democratic behavior – for democracy is a learned habit as opposed to an innate instinct. We have been taught since childhood to engage in civic activities like voting, roadside cleanup or volunteering as a PTA member. It is these activities that are integral to making our country a democracy. So, how does this fit into a column about libraries? Few people understand the expansive role libraries play in modern society. Today, libraries are, in fact, a place where people can participate in a living democratic culture. One of the founding principles of the public library is that all people deserve free, open access to our shared culture and heritage so they can be responsible community members. Libraries uphold the values of equality and community and serve everyone by providing services and a shared space to learn, discuss and grow. Libraries are dedicated to providing information at a time when there is much misinformation. One aspect of democratic behavior is the responsibility we have to recognize the division in our country and communities and try to work toward understanding and unity. What steps are libraries taking to make changes? Children are taught preschool literacy skills; teens have a safe, public place to hang out with their friends; moms and dads form life-long relationships with others as they learn to parent together; everyone has the opportunity to access information on computers; seniors come together for knitting circles and craft classes; the community comes together to garden or play in a park. The social space is free and open to everyone, unlike other commercial institutions such as coffeehouses or restaurants that not everyone can afford. We need to defend, at all costs, a public institution that serves as such a bedrock of a democratic society. Democracy is thriving at your community library Walchak.

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