The 2011 campaign was focused on raising awareness in the community of the grant and “why we need” a new library. The tone of the campaign brochures and mailings were “people oriented” with a lot of smiling faces and quotes etc. Naturally the financial aspect was part of the focus as well. We lost by only 153 votes out of the 6,163 votes cast (27%). We conducted a traditional local voter campaign with 350+ lawn signs, a kick-off rally on the town common, endorsements, newspaper inserts, stand-outs in the center of town, cable television shows and multiple mailings. We also manned a table by the entrance of the library (during high traffic times) for the six weeks prior to the election to distribute information about the library project. Our library has on average 1,000 visitors per day. The campaign committee consisted of about 50 residents. The Town Manager, Selectmen, Finance Committee and School Committee were in support of the project. By election day had a database of 1,200 households.

In 2011 there was opposition to the library proposal which consisted of a small group of residents. They were very vocal in the local media and had a website, cable television shows and signs. Their signs and campaign literature misrepresented the facts and cost of the project. Their message was that libraries are “obsolete” and the new library project was too costly and too big.

The day after the election many voters called the library to say they had not voted because they thought it would pass easily. Although we lost by such a small margin (which was disheartening), we felt we succeeded in educating the community about the need for a new library. An interesting finding was that 1,200 voters who had never voted in a local election before had come out to vote. We believe those votes reflected the time spent sitting outside the library to educate out library users about the project. An adjacent town (Grafton) lost their library vote by more than 1,000 votes within weeks of our vote.

In January 2013 the town received word that the funding was available and approval required by December 31st. The library building was reduced by 10% and re-designed by a local architect that had designed other municipal buildings in town. Local response to the new design was universally positive whereas the 2011 the design had mixed reviews.

The message of the 2013 campaign - a vote for the library was a “good financial decision” for the town. The 2013 Library campaign was solely focused on “getting out the vote” by reaching out to “Likely Voters” or those voters that usually vote in local elections. The 2011 election had informed the community of the problems with the existing library so the “need” had already been firmly established. The website, Facebook and all mailings and brochures were focused on the financial aspect of the proposal.

Over eight weekends, 35 campaign workers knocked on over 1,700 doors of “likely voters only” and rated the responses 1-5 with 1 a supporter and 2 a likely supporter. If the voters were not home a brochure was left at the door.

After analyzing the 2011 election results, it was decided to focus on parents of school age children (likely voters age 30 to 50) who did not vote in 2011. We sent 2,500 postcards to that group with the message - a vote for the library is “good for schools”. In addition, 6,000+ postcards were sent to households of likely voters. A third postcard mailing was sent to the supporter database shortly before the election with the message – “it is up to YOU to VOTE”. 2,500 Dear Friend cards were also sent. Our database grew to 3,000+ supporters. The Town Manager, Selectmen, Finance Committee and School Committee were again in support of the project. Some members of all those committees were very active in all aspects of the campaign. The Town Manager was very articulate in the need for the project. We received overwhelming support from Town Meeting Members for the project in 2011 and 2013. At the Town Meeting in 2013, we added presentations by leaders of the Ballot Question Committee to speak in favor of the project in addition to the Library Building Committee report.
We reused 150 lawn signs salvaged from the 2011 election and added a sticker that said “town share $13.6M”. Initially we did not plan to put up lawn signs, but the opposition put up signs which misrepresented the cost and type of election (signs said – vote no for Prop 2/12) and members of the community and campaign committee were clamoring for signs. We also held signs at standouts in the town center the three weekends before the election.

The Sunday before the election, the committee called over 1,800 households to remind them to vote, and on election day the committee re-called 550 households called on Sunday. The day before the election, 700 “Vote Tuesday” door hangers were placed on the doors of supporters in five key precincts.

The same opposition group was active again and misrepresented the cost and facts. Their message had not changed - libraries are “obsolete” and the new library was too big and too costly. They focused on the cost of the project which had increased by $5M.

Election Day turnout was 36%; the highest for any debt exclusion in the history of the town at. The votes in favor of the library increased by 1,831 over the 2011 election to 4,842 in favor and the votes against the library increased by only 148 to 3,311 against. The “get out the vote campaign” was a huge success! The campaign committee was over 100 people strong by election day and fundraising dollars kept coming in and exceeded our expenses which allowed is to give the Friends of the Library $478 before we dissolved the ballot question committee. The new Shrewsbury Library is in the design development stage and will be open in the spring of 2016.

**How did social media impact the election in 2011 vs. 2013**

**Facebook** was a huge part of the campaign. Social media had been used to a limited extent two years earlier with very modest activity. In late August we reactivated our page which had “29 Likes” at the time, and hit “400 Likes” by election day, November 5th. The activity grew fairly quickly and as Election Day approached grew to 3,500+ views per posting. We used the site to give information, to announce official meetings, campaign events and activities related to the campaign. Our postings were typically short facts about the proposal or event and grew in frequency. We found longer postings were not read if the reader had to scroll down the posting. We posted at least once a day and more as we got closer to the election.

We reused the 2011 website ([www.voteYESforSPL.com](http://www.voteYESforSPL.com)) but changed the message and look of the site. Our new campaign message was that a vote for the Library is a “good financial decision” for our town. The website included all the fact and figures about the proposal and was fairly minimal. The headline on the website pages was “A Better Bang for Our Bucks – Vote YES on November 5th”.
