

ANNOUNCING THE NEW VENTURE

You can build a nurturing library environment but patrons won't come—unless you tell them it's available. Many a library program has failed because staff had either been lackadaisical about marketing the programs or they marketed the programs incorrectly.

The failure of marketing is even more pronounced when discussing populations such as the disabled, seniors, and people who do not speak English.

The marketing tools must be accessible and must be placed where the people live, work, and play. To accomplish this task the library may have to rethink its current marketing strategies, unless, of course staff members are witnessing a growth spurt among the targeted populations.

To reach these potential patrons the library must work with community partners to help send out the message. Some of these partners are new to the library and have the potential of becoming the library's greatest advocate when seeking community approval and support.

In addition to seeking new partners to help with marketing to new audiences, the marketing staff must think about the format of the public relations documents they produce. Developing accessible workstations and websites, and then distributing printed information that is not legible does no good.

Reaching patrons with disabilities

Librarians often state "Well, we installed all that access equipment yet blind people don't use it. They must not want it or do not need it." To which disabilities advocates reply, "But who did you tell?"

More often than not, the answer is "There's a sign near the machine and we put some flyers in the information rack." Unfortunately library staff members do not reason that if a person can't see they're not going to see the sign or read the brochures. Staff must be active in letting patrons know the library has services designed for special needs.

One-on-one is a great approach

Staff should feel free to approach blind patrons and ask "May I help you find something today?" and alert them to the location of accessible computers, washrooms, the service desk, and so on.

Likewise, when patrons with a noticeable visual impairment are browsing, ask "Is there anything I can help you find today?" Continuing with "If you want to give your eyes a little rest while in the library, we have a CCTV available that enlarges text." Unintentionally offending someone is better than purposely ignoring them for fear you might offend them.

Likewise, if staff members notice a patron is checking out large-print materials, they should feel free to tell the patron about the library's CCTV and other services. Maybe use these words: "I noticed that you are selecting some

The following groups could make great marketing partners. Consult the organization's website for other useful links:

Learning Disabilities Association,
www.ldanatl.org/lda

International Dyslexia Association,
www.interdys.org/index.jsp

State and area agencies on aging, www.aoa.gov/eldfam/How_To_Find/Agencies/Agencies.asp

Library of Congress National Library Service,
www.loc.gov/nls

National Federation of the Blind, www.nfb.org

Self Help for Hard of Hearing, www.shhh.org

American Council of the Blind, www.acb.org

Blinded Veterans Association,
www.bva.org

United Cerebral Palsy,
www.ucp.org

Easter Seals,
www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer

large-print materials today. I thought you might want to know about some of the other items we have for people who need increased magnification."

The library also could produce large-print bookmarks announcing the CCTVs and place a stack near the large-print books. Desk staff also can discreetly place a bookmark in large-print books when they are checked out.

The one-on-one approach can be used with all special audiences including seniors and those patrons for whom English is a second language. Although an occasional patron may be put off, overall, patrons appreciate staff taking time to talk to them.

Marketing outlets for patrons with special accessibility needs

Chances are many libraries do not have people with disabilities as regular patrons, so advertising within the library will not generate much feedback. Nevertheless, continue internal promotion because family members or friends of someone with a disability will see the message and pass it on. After the internal promotion, then staff members responsible for marketing need to move into the community.

Many libraries seek service providers and recreational organizations used by people with disabilities to serve as the conduit from the community to the library. Encourage these community partners to place signs announcing the library's resources on their bulletin boards and include articles about the services in their newsletters. Ask these partners to include the library's brochures in their client packets. Offers for library staff to speak at meetings are appreciated.

Good marketing partners to reach patrons with disabilities include:

- The National Library Service's Regional Library (RL) for the Blind and Physically Disabled (or subregional) in the library's service area
(Ask if the RL can mail promotional materials about the library's programs or place an article in its newsletter. Often the RL is the library most patrons with print disabilities use.)
- Independent living centers
- Area Agency on Aging
- SHHH chapters (membership organization for people with hearing impairment)
- American Council of the Blind, National Federation of the Blind, and Blinded Veterans Association
- Learning Disability Association of America (LDA) and the International Dyslexia Association
- Local chapter of United Cerebral Palsy
- Local chapter Easter Seals
- Local hospitals and rehabilitation centers
- Special education department of local schools
- Parent support groups

Most organizations serving special populations have websites. Offer links to appropriate websites and ask the organizations to return the service for the benefit of their customers. Ask these organizations place the library's events on their calendar.

Without fail, these groups are glad to assist the library since this partnering brings added information to their clients or members. Also remember to advertise the library's targeted services under appropriate categories with the local phone directory.

Formatting marketing materials for patrons with disabilities

If the library staff wants patrons to read informational flyers and brochures, they must be sure that they make the documents readable and accessible. This easy task only requires a little creativity while following some important guidelines.

Contrast is one of the most critical factors in enhancing visual functioning, for printed materials as well as environmental design. The following tips for preparing printed documents allows most patrons with usable vision to read the library's printed documents:¹

- Print text with the best possible contrast.
- Use sans serif fonts and avoid decorative fonts. Arial and Tahoma are two recommended fonts.
- Use large-print type, preferably 18 points, with 14 points being the smallest.
- Use only dark blues and greens when different-colored lettering for headings is required because some emphasis is difficult to read for many people with low vision.
- Use bold type to make the print more legible.
- Avoid using italics or all capital letters. Both make differentiating among letters more difficult.
- Avoid using paper with a glossy finish like that typically used in magazines. Glossy pages create glare, which make them difficult to read.
- Space lines of text by 1.5 instead of single space. Many people who are visually impaired have difficulty finding the beginning of the next line when single spacing is used.
- Use short sentences that are easy to comprehend.
- If appropriate, use pictures and diagrams.

Librarians often ask a few people with low vision look at the document to assure it is readable. Also offer key marketing tools in Braille, as well as large print. If the budget allows, audio recordings could be offered.

Reaching senior patrons

Written marketing materials work well to reach seniors since these materials may be picked up and consulted when needed and as many times as needed. For many older adults, printed materials have a legitimacy that cannot be equaled.

Distribute these materials to:

- Assisted living facilities
- Government websites
- Senior health and recreation fairs
- Hospitals and health clinics
- Senior meal sites
- Housing complexes for seniors
- Senior programs sponsored by neighborhood or religious organizations

If possible, advertise the library's services in coupon mailers as well as printing inserts for utility bills. Utilities may even print a message on the envelopes. Seniors do read mail sent to them, so dollars spent on mailings are not wasted.

Many older people enjoy sharing their knowledge and tidbits of information with family and friends. Be sure each senior you teach and reach is armed with the library's promotional materials. Word-of-mouth testimonials always beat all the best printed materials available. Sometimes, all that needs to be said to patrons is "tell your friends what we have for them."

Formatting senior materials

When preparing printed texts for seniors, use many of the tips presented for those with disabilities as well as those listed below:²

- Use light lettering (white or light yellow) on a dark background, usually black since it is easier to read than the standard presentation of dark lettering on light background.
- Make spacing between letters wide. Tightly spaced text makes reading difficult for many people who are visually impaired, particularly for those who have central visual field defects, such as macular degeneration.
- Break text into clear sections, dividing text into clear paragraphs organized around one topic.
- Use headings for main sections. Headings alert reader as to what is the most important idea in the text.
- Use lots of white space.
- Use bold-faced type or underlining prudently to help readers recognize key points.
- Use active voice when writing the text.

Following these suggestions gives seniors, as well as all readers, the best possible chance of understanding what services are available from the library. Use these tips when preparing all tip sheets and instructions used in classrooms.

Reaching patrons who do not speak English

Compose documents in patron's native tongue

Printed information targeting those people who do not speak English should not be printed only in English. Printing some documents in the patron's native language demonstrates that the library recognizes the cultural diversity of the community and welcomes all members of the community to use the library's

services. Producing any document in another language does require commitment and planning.

Ensure the translations are accurate. Inaccurate or poorly translated information can be worse than no information at all.

Seek a partnership with cultural organizations that have members who can read and write the language the library needs translated. Members of this group can serve as translators or proofreaders. Most cultural groups are honored to be asked to perform this service.

Palabra Windows (Exploring Windows)

Be aware that cultural and diversity issues exist within ethnic groups. If the library staff members, know many Hispanic people are in the service area, determine if they are Cuban Spanish, Mexican Spanish, or Puerto Rican Spanish since dialects vary.³

If at all possible, find a translator who is bilingual and bicultural (understands the cultural nuances of the patrons) in both the spoken and written form of the language. This translator also could offer advice on color design, presentation style, appropriate symbols, and illustrations.⁴

As with documents prepared for those with disabilities, test them before duplicating and distributing. Share the finished document with a few patrons. Request that they read the document in the translated language and tell you what information the document is relaying.

If funds permit, a bilingual format is preferred. If funds are limited then choose to print the informational brochures in the targeted language.

Locations to distribute marketing documents to reach non-English-speaking people

Many well-translated documents fail because they never reach the intended audience. The library's information rack cannot be the only place these documents are distributed.

Marketing staff should place translated documents in:

- Local cultural heritage clubs and associations
- Travel agents
- Places of worship
- Immigration services
- Ethnic food distributors and restaurants
- Community-based organizations that work with the targeted audience
- Healthcare and social service providers

Most of these partners welcome the opportunity to work with the library since they see this partnership as a way to promote their culture.

Brochures and flyers are not the only way to reach targeted populations. Libraries also should consider:

- Community television programs who have features designed especially for seniors or who broadcast in other languages

- Ethnic radio programs

Most college stations support a few hours of broadcasting in other languages and often play Public Service Announcements. Larger markets also may have foreign language radio shows.

- Ads placed in newspapers targeting special populations such as seniors or people with disabilities

Foreign language newspapers may offer low-cost advertising. The library also could offer to write an article on library services.

Use the library's website

What better way to share information about new technology but through technology? People who surf the Web are generally information seekers and sharers who are glad to pass on any information about technology to others.

Although they may not need adaptive technology or special training, or alternate language access visitors are almost sure to pass on the information to those who need it. Additionally, some surfers may be enticed into the library to try the new equipment and may like it enough to stay and become a volunteer trainer.

Also remember to offer all brochures on the website because you may never see Web patrons in the physical library. Also include links to the appropriate Web page devoted to the brochure's subject matter.

Patrons have to know the services are available

Librarians can be disappointed by doing all the right things in regard to expanding access to special groups but then not see these groups in the library. Marketing to special populations is a constant and ongoing task.

Working with the library's graphic designers, patrons, and community groups is a good way to ensure the information is sent to the people who need it in a format that is usable.

Notes

¹American Foundation for the Blind. Fact Sheet: Tips for Making Print More Legible. August 15, 1998. www.afb.org/info_document_view.asp?DocumentID=210 (accessed Feb. 28, 2004).

²Ibid. and Stevens, Beth. "How Seniors Learn," Center for Medicare Education. Issue Brief, vol. 4, no. 9, 2003. p. 6. www.medicareed.org/content/CMEPubDocs/ACFA8CC.pdf.

³Reinhard, Susan. "Translating Materials for Non-English Speaking Audiences." Center for Medicare Education. *Issue Brief*, vol. 1, no. 3. p. 2.

⁴Ibid.