

A man with dark hair, wearing a green sweater and a blue jacket, is shown in profile, looking down at a laptop. The laptop screen is blank and yellow. The background is white.

MARKETING TOOLKIT:
How-to Brochure

GET PREPARED

Know your product
Know your customer
Make your library's resources easy to find
Speak your patron's language online
Go get 'em!

GET THE WORD OUT

Seize opportunities in the library
Network, network, network
Meet the press
Advertise
Don't give up!

**MARKETING YOUR LIBRARY'S
ONLINE RESOURCES**

HOW TO BUILD AWARENESS AND INCREASE USAGE OF YOUR LIBRARY'S ONLINE ASSETS

HOW OFTEN DO PATRONS TELL YOU THAT NO ONE HAS THE INFORMATION THEY NEED, WHEN YOU KNOW IT'S AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA THE LIBRARY'S WEBSITE?

How often do people rely on incomplete or dubious information from a general search engine, when the library's databases offer complete and authoritative content free of charge, 24 hours a day? How often have genealogists, business people, and other members of your community paid for access to databases that your online gateway delivers to them free?

Sadly, many people don't know what your library has to offer. It's time to show them what they're missing—a virtual "bookmobile" for the 21st century, bringing your entire electronic collection to their homes or

offices. Who wouldn't like free and easy access to reliable references, newspapers, magazines, e-books, and more, once they knew about it? This guide will help you as you put the power of marketing to work for your library.

This text is divided into two sections. "Get Prepared" will help you make sure that, when users do reach your site, they'll have a good experience. Once you're prepared for their arrival, you'll want to "Get the Word Out" by following the steps in the second section. The order is important: don't spread the word until you're sure you're ready for prime time!

GET PREPARED

STEP 1. KNOW YOUR PRODUCT.

You can't market a product that you don't understand, so be sure you know the "ins and outs" of the databases on your website. What information needs are they designed to serve? When would you use one of them as opposed to another database in your collection? What makes them better than a general search engine? Are they useful to kids? Can you effectively describe and demonstrate them for your patrons?

IN YOUR MARKETING TOOLKIT...

- **Look over** the enclosed database descriptions and sample user guide.
- **Take a minute to read** the templates and absorb the language. These pieces are meant to teach patrons when to use general search engines and when to go for the good stuff at the library. They also help library staff describe your resources and how they stack up against the competition.

Now **YOU** know the databases—who else on the staff should know and love them like you do? Spread your knowledge so the entire library staff can be an advocate for your electronic resources.

IDEA!

- **Pick your staff's brains.** Which databases are their favorites, and why? Create an online forum for staff to share ideas and tips about each of the databases, and save them in an online reference folder so new staff members can get up and running faster. Or borrow a trick from bookstores, where titles flagged as "staff picks" always sell more. Choose your favorite resource, explain why it's great in a brief note, and add your signature (picture too, if you want) for the personal touch. Post that on your website and watch usage go up. (For extra oomph, have a user contribute a short note on his or her favorite electronic resource, plus name and picture if willing). Be sure to rotate these "reviews" regularly.

STEP 2. KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER

Product knowledge goes hand-in-hand with understanding the customer. Look at your current patron base and identify potential new patrons who might want to use your resources. Chances are, they're already using general search engines to do online research. Your task is to modify their behavior by proving that your new mousetrap is better than the one they're using now, in ways that matter to them personally. ■ Start by making a list of the major market groups using your library. For example, a public library might have a list like this:

- Families with school-age children
- Seniors
- Genealogists
- ...and so on

Each of these groups has research needs that your library's databases and general search engines can meet. The point is, your resources meet those needs far better, and your job is to make sure your community knows all the ways how. These are just a few of the possibilities:

- Parents want safe Internet experiences for their kids, but the unmediated Web is notoriously risky for children. Searching through the library's gateway allows kids to do research in a safe environment that gives them accurate information
- Seniors need reliable, accurate answers to their questions about health. Searching the library's gateway takes them to vetted, authoritative sources.
- Genealogists need historical information that usually requires an expensive subscription. The same information—and better—is free when they use the library's Web gateway.

Your patrons' needs may be different, but you get the idea—you're matching your language to what your patrons want, whether it's homework help or genealogy. If you don't know what your community wants, find out. Talk with your patrons, and with citizens at large. Ask them about their interests, their frustrations with Internet searching, whether they know about the library's Web gateway, and what changes might make them use it more.

IDEA!

- **Assemble focus groups** of patrons and potential patrons to discuss the library's Web gateway. Since information searching can vary widely, you'll want to schedule targeted focus groups based on market segment (e.g. parents with young children, young adults, seniors, etc.). Send invitations and follow up by phone until you've confirmed at least a dozen people. Have your discussion questions ready (broad, open-ended questions such as "What kinds of questions do you use the Internet to answer?") and be prepared to demonstrate the gateway and its resources. Encourage honest feedback and take notes. Keep your eyes open for particularly insightful guests. Note that "insight" is different from "talkative." Draw out those whose comments ring true or, even better, cause you to think "aha!" You may want to stay in touch with these insightful guests as you develop your Web program. These are potential opinion-shapers and library advocates in your community.

This "need" language is the basis for crafting a message for each of your markets. Make sure your staff is on board and understands your message for each market. Use your messaging consistently in all your outreach and discussion.

(continued on outside panel)

STEP 3: MAKE YOUR LIBRARY'S RESOURCES EASY TO FIND

Is your database gateway easy for non-librarians to use? Can they find the resources quickly? People have become attuned to self-service, and they expect those services to be intuitive. In an environment rife with alternatives, people quickly abandon those that are puzzling. If you want patrons to turn to your virtual library first, and regularly, for their information needs, you must make sure they can get to your resources quickly and easily.

IDEA!

- **Quick field test!** Is it really that quick and easy to find your homepage and online resources? Go to the coffee shop and find a laptop volunteer who'll trade outspoken feedback for a latte superissimo. Have him find your library's homepage, and then the online resources. Take copious notes, and put any problems at the top of your "must fix" list. [You can field-test anyone who doesn't already know the library, like your neighbor or relative... but give yourself a break. You deserve a trip to the coffee shop and a latte yourself, hard as you work.]

Let's start with the library's Web address. Your competition's addresses are easy to remember: google.com, yahoo.com, etc. If your library's address still ends in something like "city.lib.state.us" you're burdening your patrons' memories and fingers. What do your patrons call the library? Consider buying a domain name that matches that name. For example, the Chicago Public Library is www.chicagopubliclibrary.org. It's an easy address for Chicago residents (plus everyone else) to both guess and remember. ■ Once you have visitors on your homepage, the gateway to your online resources should be bold and inviting. Don't make your visitors hunt for them or they might give up. Consider a click-through graphic that not only invites visitors but tells them what they'll find:

ENTER YOUR VIRTUAL LIBRARY: Click here for free online resources that answer your questions 24/7!

- Homework Help
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- ...all available with a mouse-click

IN YOUR MARKETING TOOLKIT...

- **Take it a step further** by including a promotion for your library's resources right on your homepage. Download the Flash promotion provided on the enclosed CD to your homepage. Visitors can click on it to learn how and why to use your library's online resources.

STEP 4. SPEAK YOUR PATRON'S LANGUAGE ONLINE

Libraries are rife with industry jargon and systems that can confuse patrons (or worse, make them feel unwelcome). Your library's Web gateway will likely be experienced remotely, with no librarian to guide the visitor. You must speak your patrons' language online so they can navigate with ease. ■ Start with the basics: do your patrons use "databases" or do they visit websites? If they don't use the word "databases," don't describe them that way. Don't know which word they use? Ask. Talk with your patrons, show them the gateway, and ask if they understand what the label means. Take it a step further and ask if there's a better way to label the gateway. ■ Next, look at the resources' labels. Is there simply a list of resources, such as "ProQuest Platinum" or "SIRS Researcher"? Unless your patrons work in the information industry, they won't know what the titles mean. If you do use an industry label, make sure you add a description of it in words your patrons will understand.

IN YOUR MARKETING TOOLKIT...

- **Don't reinvent the wheel:** A range of brief ProQuest database descriptions have been provided for use on your library's website. These friendly and inviting descriptions explain the contents and uses of many of the resources available through your library's gateway. You can customize these to reflect your library's subscriptions by accessing the enclosed CD.

STEP 5: GO GET 'EM!

If you followed steps 1 through 4, it's time to spread the word. Read on for how to "Get the word out."



GET THE WORD OUT

STEP 1. SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LIBRARY You have a built-in audience every day at the library, and every encounter with patrons is an opportunity to teach them about your online resources. Seize those moments! ■ Create brief, easy-to-read brochures that advertise the gateway. (Remember to use the messages you developed for your patron base in addressing their needs—see “Get prepared: Step 2”). Put brochures at the circulation desk and send one home with every patron checking out a book. Keep a stack at the reference desk, as well. ■ Speaking of the reference desk, the staff here are ideally placed to introduce your online resources as they help patrons with their questions. Encourage the reference staff to introduce the entire gateway, rather than answering just one question. These folks are also positioned to gather feedback about patron response—whether positive or negative—that can help you fine-tune the format, language, and contents of your online library.

IN YOUR MARKETING TOOLKIT...

- **A Patron Brochure...Done!** See sample enclosed in your marketing toolkit. You can customize and print your own version by accessing the enclosed CD.

Where do patrons stop and linger in the library? Watch for natural stopping points and take advantage of them to spread the word about your online resources. Create a one-page ad that briefly summarizes the contents and needs that can be met. Post it in places where patrons can easily see it and have time to read it.

IN YOUR MARKETING TOOLKIT...

- **Promotional Flier...Done!** See sample enclosed in your marketing toolkit. You can customize and print your own version by accessing the enclosed CD.

These ideas are the tip of the iceberg. Create these marketing tools and consider every encounter with patrons an opportunity to teach them about all the good things their library gives them online.

STEP 2. NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK Imagine that perfect day, when your staff personally demonstrates the library gateway and its electronic riches to every patron and potential patron in your community. If that day comes, go for it! But you can also build a network of advocates to do it for you, every day. ■ In “Get Prepared: Step 2,” you made a list of your library’s major market segments. You looked at their needs; now look at who influences them. The public library whose list we used earlier cited:

- Families with school-age children
- Seniors
- Genealogists
- ...and so on

These groups might have influencers that include teachers, pediatricians, doctors, and the local genealogical society. Introducing these groups to the gateway is a great way to get THEM to spread the word to the people you want to reach. And with that word of mouth comes endorsement. ■ When, where, and how can you reach them? Doctors might be best reached with a letter about your gateway (be sure to mention your health resources!) plus the brochure you developed. Teachers and community groups might be accessible through meetings, where you can demonstrate the gateway and its contents. Be prepared to take your show on the road.

IDEA!

- **Your library is part of a larger network**—a government, a school administration, etc. Because of its information resources, libraries are in a unique position to serve this community. For example, while a public library representative may already be attending municipal meetings, you can add some kick and boost the library’s profile by bringing information “goody bags” for representatives of other departments—research culled from the library’s online resources to help them with their projects. Be sure to include the source, Web address, and any passwords they’ll need to access more information.

STEP 3. MEET THE PRESS One of the biggest influencers for public library patrons is the local media. Newspapers, radio, and TV stations can reach your major markets more effectively than almost any other source. Their coverage carries weight—an implicit endorsement—that can make phones ring and mice click. Don’t overlook or back down from these opportunities. In fact, make the opportunities happen. ■ First, make a list of the reporters, editors, and producers whose beat includes the library. Don’t know? Call the media’s main line and ask. Gather contact information and keep it accessible. Next, pay close attention to their coverage—read, listen, view—to learn their style. You’ll soon understand how they approach their stories.

IDEA!

- **Now that you know what your beat reporter’s interests are, send her an information “care package.”** Assemble research and resources from the library’s online resources that match her interest areas. Be sure to include Web addresses, access instructions, and any password she might need. Follow up by phone to see if she has questions or further needs. Be prepared to tell the library’s story (“the service is free to residents and can be accessed from home,” etc.)
- **Schedule a no-strings-attached lunch with your beat reporter.** Tell her that you would value coverage of the library and ask how you can make that happen. Be prepared to tell the story of your library’s online resources and ask how it fits with her beat. Be sure to follow any advice she provides.

Now it’s time to go after a story. Prepare a press release that helps the reporter accomplish her goals—giving the nuts and bolts of a news piece. Make sure your message is loud and clear, and tell her why it’s important, or fascinating; why it’s timely, and how readers/viewers/listeners will benefit from this story.

IN YOUR MARKETING TOOLKIT...

- **Press Release...Done!** A template press release has been provided. Fill in your library’s pertinent information and adjust as needed. Then, go get the coverage!

Before you send the release, be sure you’ve identified a spokesperson at the library who is comfortable talking with the press AND has the expertise to provide a rich interview. ■ Email is the preferred method of press release delivery for most reporters. Land mail is marginally effective, at best. The most effective? Email with a phone call to follow up. When you call, pitch your story again just as if you never sent the email. Remember: you have the advantage of being one of the “good guys.” Libraries are beloved institutions—be proud and confident when you call. ■ If you get the story, congratulations! If you don’t get it, don’t give up. No matter the outcome, cultivate a relationship with the reporter. Stay in touch by sending news from the library and be sure to follow her career. When you see a story under her byline that you like, send a quick email to tell her so. You’ll find that every time you pitch a story, it gets easier.

STEP 4. AND THE CLASSIC: ADVERTISE Advertising can be expensive, but there are plenty of budget-conscious options, too. No matter what you’re spending, your approach should be strategic—don’t squander opportunities to talk with your markets. ■ Start with your markets/needs list developed in “Get Prepared: Step 2.” What are the media reaching these markets? Radio stations, newspapers, newsletters, etc. Contact them to get their ad rates and schedules. Advertising salespeople can help you with good editorial matches (for example, perhaps there’s a back-to-school segment featuring homework tips for parents). Don’t overlook the obvious like your library’s newsletter. ■ Before you tap the budget, be sure the expense is worth it. Consider the breadth of coverage and the match between the coverage and your markets. An inexpensive piece of advertising real estate may be money ill spent if it doesn’t go to the markets you’re seeking. Also, ask if your library qualifies for free space through the Ad Council or a radio PSA (public service announcement).

IDEA!

- **Some media (especially public radio and TV stations) will barter advertising time or space in return for research services.** You have information professionals on staff who can do fact-checking or conduct research to support their reporting staff. Offer a trade for services before you spend.

Next, develop the ad. For print: Copy first, with the appropriate market message as the anchor. Design second. Remember: your competition is fierce and slick. Invest in professional copy and design, creating pieces that can be used multiple times. And remember that ads are “teasers,” not your whole story. With too much text or art, ads are too busy for busy people to bother with.

IN YOUR MARKETING TOOLKIT...

- **Ad Slick...Done!** See sample “ad slick” and radio script in your toolkit. Add your library’s pertinent information and go!

STEP 5: DON’T GIVE UP! Effective marketing is an ongoing commitment that gets easier over time. Think of it as part of your library’s daily operations. Just as you set a course for the development of your online collections, marketing these resources requires goals and planning, too.

Samples from your Marketing Toolkit





WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

HAVE QUESTIONS? SUCCESSES OR LESSONS LEARNED YOU WANT TO REPORT ON? We want to hear from you. Send your feedback, questions, thoughts, and ideas on marketing online resources to virtuallibraryhowto@il.proquest.com. We'll share what we hear and continue to learn from each other!

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