

Promoting Your Collections: Merchandising and More

Presented by Kathy Dempsey, Libraries Are Essential
Kathy@LibrariesAreEssential.com

Libraries Are Essential

PCIWebinars
Your Trusted Source for Training

The collections your library carefully curates are meant to be used as much as possible. It's just not logical to spend tens of thousands of dollars on collections, then spend nothing to tell people you have them. You cannot assume that people know what you have. In fact, studies by OCLC and other organizations have repeatedly proven that many people are not aware of what their libraries offer—even if they're regular users.

Main Points for Successfully Promoting Collections

1. Don't talk about the collections themselves; talk about what *benefits* they hold.
2. Don't promote everything to everyone, in general terms; promote specific items to members of the target audience that's most likely to need them.
3. Don't assume that promotion should be free; spending money will ensure that messages will be seen by the right target audiences.

Instead of directly saying, "Use this resource," craft stories about successful usage; this is "content marketing."

Spend some money! If you put \$500,000 into collections per year, then spending \$5,000 on promotion is only 1% of your collections budget.

To determine what to spend your precious dollars on, study data on:

- current resource usage
- current resource costs (ROI?)
- service-population demographics
- survey info from users & nonusers about their needs / wants

Sketch out a plan to make the most of your efforts.

Promoting Inside Your Library

This is the easiest and cheapest thing to do (but it's also vital to reach those who don't come into your buildings or use your website).

- Make your paper promo material eye-catching, but don't overwhelm people with it. Make sure materials are organized and easy for people to find and take along.
- Use the screens of your OPACs for promo messages.
- Consider doing a communications audit to ensure that all materials are created and branded consistently.
- Make sure your signs, fliers, etc. are clear and professional-looking.
- Seek out and employ ready-made resources, like lists of quotes, promotions made by library organizations, and materials provided by vendors.

Promoting Outside Your Library

Put your promotions where the people already are—Google, social media platforms, specific apps—to reach people at their point of need, and those who don't use libraries.

- Maintain a consistent and professional social media presence. Follow and interact with other organizations and with influencers in your community.
- Buy inexpensive, targeted Facebook ads, and / or boost your posts.
- Buy Google Ads or apply for the Google Ad Grant program.
- Tie your posts and promotions to local news, events, weather, and other non-library topics to make them more relevant to nonusers.
- Have good-looking outdoor signage that's clean and up to date.

Merchandising

Merchandising is more than making cute displays; it's about strategic ways to encourage people to use or buy items. Good merchandising increases circulation and usage.

- Remember that your entryway is a reflection of your organization; the way you welcome visitors makes a big impression on them.
- Realize that people are comparing libraries to their retail experiences.
- Make sure all promo messages, signs, posters, etc. have clearly written text, appropriate fonts, and a professional tone / look / feel.
- Use slatwall and acrylic sign-holders to keep things neat.
- Make displays strategic; have a plan for them.
- Employ digital screens or frames so you don't appear totally old-fashioned.
- Invite people to use and check out items that are on display.