

Education Institute Program

Tuesday, Feb. 19th, 3-4pm ET (12-1pm PT)

[Technologies to Promote Your Libraries](#)

Part of Tech Tuesdays: Talking with Techies Series
with Stephen Abram- 1 hour AUDIO CONFERENCE

In our fast changing Web 2.0 on-line world, how do we keep up with new technologies to use promote our libraries? One way is to talk to those in the know and that's what this audio session is all about. Jane Dysart, Dysart & Jones Associates, interviews globe-traveling Stephen Abram about the cool new technology tools he has experienced, heard about, observed as well as interesting research about new technologies, specifically those that can be used to promote the library. Through exciting stories, Abram shares his knowledge of new technologies and examples of libraries using them, and provides lots of places to look for further resources.

Blogs and Useful Resources:

A couple of library marketing sites and blogs to surf:

The "M" Word - Marketing Libraries

A blog designed to bring the wonderful world of marketing to librarians.

<http://themwordblog.blogspot.com/>

Library Marketing - Thinking Outside the Book

Resources, readings, news and ideas for librarians who seek outside-the-book marketing innovations for their libraries.

<http://librarymarketing.blogspot.com/>

Marketing Treasures

<http://www.chrisolson.com/marketingtreasures/indexmt.html>

Marketing Library Services

<http://www.infoday.com/MLS/default.shtml>

The Idea Sandbox

<http://www.idea-sandbox.com/blog/>

The Generator Blog

Cool mashups for visual interest

<http://generatorblog.blogspot.com/>

Article for pre-reading

Can All This 2.0 Stuff Help Libraries with Promotion?

by Stephen Abram

I recall times in my early career when I spoke at a lot of sessions about library marketing and public relations. It was the early 80's and the beginning of the age of electronic librarianship. We were promoting our newly developed skills in online searching (Ha! at 300 baud!) and our new positioning in electronic research. It was the early days of the discussion with words like cybraries, paperless, virtual and digital. We were thrilled that online research seemed to be a guarantee of job security – just like those folks over in the word processing centers! Ah, nostalgia doesn't protect. The changes have run unabated from the commercial Internet to the web to 2.0 and virtual worlds like Second Life. And we're still challenged to communicate our role for better understanding of our value.

Why?

I suspect that we're not being assertive enough. Too many of us try to influence subtly. Too many of us are not direct enough. Too many of us only use a small range of the tools in the marketer's toolkit. Many think people will notice the good work we do naturally. They won't. And too many of us believe that it's just good enough to be right, good and to tell folks stuff. It's not.

What are the basic marketing building blocks? Simple really and classic: Place, Product, Price, Promotion, Public Relations and Personal Selling. That's the classic marketing mix. We have a great product. Our price is right on. We're everywhere – indeed more places than Starbucks or McDonalds! We promote libraries using everything from websites to bookmarks. However, we fall down on the personal selling skills and strategies. Perhaps we feel that since most libraries are 'free' to the end user, we don't need to sell. We fail to understand the nature of influence, social recommendations and how the politics of our environment works. People pay. They may not always be paying cash directly to us but they are paying in taxes, tuition, time, their career or family success or in their own personal success. Indeed 'time' often comes out on top in surveys of today's market as the most important factor. How did Ranganathan put it? "Save the time of the reader." Can we promote savings if gas rises to \$5/gallon? Can we save time with eBooks and web stations?

Libraries have a lot to promote and sell. Besides our myriad of programs and services, we need to influence a lot of other things in our community – like fundraising goals, budgets and bonds, local awareness of our role in the economy, education and community success. Can we use our library communications to generate behavioural change? Better educated citizens,

higher performing students, better small business success, large industry and tourism? Can we set our goals high? Can we measure and prove success?

Selling is not a dirty word. Selling is about people not products and I believe that libraries are more about people than books. Selling is a journey not an event and must be baked into the DNA of libraries. Selling is situational. Sustainable selling is about *Attitude* more than *Aptitude*. You aren't born with the skills, they're learned. Selling is a learned professional skill - there's no such thing as a "natural". The key is to choose, in every situation, to make a call to action and to ask for the sale – the library transaction, the sign-up, the endorsement, the donation. Are all of our staff and colleagues ready for this step?

I am fascinated by the influencing process and find it very interesting to think about the shift that has happened in influencing tools – driven largely by the new range of web 2.0 tools that has created a major opportunity to communicate with the citizenry and involve, motivate, and engage them. I am amazed at what has happened in the last two elections in the U.S. and Canada around these tools and how they are materially changing the political process. Can libraries learn from these changes?

So, in an effort to keep you up-to-date on the key electronic tools being used by folks everywhere, I thought I'd use this month's column to list the main tools that you'll need to be aware of and add to your toolkits for making an even greater difference in your communities. I am assuming you're already fully cognizant and using the traditional tools like brochures, websites, ads, direct mail, flyers, billboards, banners, and lawn signs. I know there are many great examples in libraryland using the 2.0 stuff to promote libraries.

Here's a modest list of ones I consider pretty important. I haven't included URL's since they're so easy for you to find and I've blogged about many of these at *Stephen's Lighthouse*. Most of these you've already seen have a major impact on the current U.S. presidential elections and have figured prominently in many other jurisdictions. There are loads of great examples of most in libraries. As always, the best compliment to finding a great idea in another library is to steal it!

1. YouTube

- Every candidate in Canada and the U.S. in the last two years has had some form of YouTube video. Sometimes they're planned and produced and sometimes they just happen, driven by the competition or the amateur audience and citizen journalists.
- Review the 2007 InfoTubey's Award winners where you can see many examples of fun and educational library videos.
- Do one – have fun. Viral it – use viral marketing and let it fly. Check to see if any about your library are already there!

- Try it to demonstrate story hours, teen contests, rock concerts, gaming nights, literacy training, and more – to attract folks to the big events.

2. Second Life

- IBM has 400(!) employees working on environments for this site. Companies, libraries, and charities are having early successes here. Check out the libraries in SL for Alliance Library System, Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenberg County, McMaster University, etc. Check out American Cancer Society and March of Dimes presences.
- I am told that every U.S. presidential candidate has a presence here. Indeed, John McCain's Second Life site was vandalized by a feces spewing robot.
- Think about this for orientations, events, education, walk-in books, author events, teen outreach, etc.

3. Facebook

- This is the sweet spot for some politicians since it attracts the majority of first and second time national voters. My 22 year old son's Facebook site got him interviewed by the Canadian Press newswire.
- Get on and invite your contacts. Identify 'personalities' of your library and promote them with their own sites. Do you have a budding Nancy Pearl? It's time for librarians to de-cloak. Professionals don't hide their identities like Clark Kent.
- Check out F8 for Facebook Developers and add your OPAC, databases, website links. Try doing Facebook for reference.
- Understand the power of Facebook Groups, political party links, friends' networks and event features. Can you bring people into your events and programs?

4. MySpace

- This is the granddaddy of big social networks. It's more entertainment and socially-oriented but the average age is reported to be 32 and that's significant.
- Get on MySpace to learn more and look at its use for special markets. Advertisers are big there – politics follows quickly.
- Build a personality online – individual staff and institutionally. Add your OPAC and services. Do invites – like Rock the Shelves, final 4 gaming tournaments, author readings, etc.
- Connect to local MySpace groups – even local bands and content creators.

5. Flickr

- Collect your pictures in one place and share them with your teams? It's a natural concept for engaging your communities.
- Are you ready to develop tagging rules for library use? Can you approve pictures for wide use?
- Can you collect your volunteers' pictures so that you'll recognize them? Can you get a major collection of library images in one place to foster visual promotion skills?
- Think about genealogy, local history, teens and seniors. Can you take pictures of your local sites of interest or gravestones and build links to your tourism sector?
- Try holding scanning parties to collect local collections of antique photos.

6. Podcasts

- Check out ODEO or the myriad of other podcasting tools and remember that iTunes is both a platform and distributor.
- Add your voice to the community. Telling stories is at the heart of the influencing process to make your arguments passionately and tell your stories with color.
- Discover your voice 'personalities' and create library-positive tales. Book reviews, book chats, video or game reviews are all positive steps. Who is the voice of your library? Are there any users, like teens, there?
- Get your Director to podcast – 5 minutes max. Are there other voices that reflect your community – users, staff, trustees, testimonials?
- Can you find other local podcasts and search the spoken word? Are they in your collection and OPAC?

7. Wikipedia

- Remember you can create your own Wiki with PB Wiki and Media Wiki.
- Check out the Wikipedia entries that matter to your situation (or create one). Have you looked at your institution or city in Wikipedia? Check out the competition too. Check out the issues? Are the entries balanced?
- Can you set up RSS feeds on the Wikipedia entries that matter to you? Beware of wiki vandalism.

8. Ning

- Create communities within communities. Organize your teams and provide them with access to your community's videos, podcasts, blog postings, links, etc. Ning is a very powerful tool!
- Build a team – private or public – to share information in context of a bond or budget campaign.

- Can you find and organize your supporters this well? Is this an easy way to start an e-mail/letter writing campaign?

9. Twitter

- Too poor to afford walkie-talkies at a library event? Try Twitter (or Jaiku) on your cel phone or laptop and you can keep everyone in contact and informed. Get ready for the trend in micro-blogging!

10. Mozes

- Looking to build a smart mob? Try building a texting system to local cel phones (e.g. local press, teams, and library supporters) so that you're connected.
- Can you build a messaging dashboard tied to mailing lists for communicating news, events, ideas, positions...?

11. NowPublic

- Check out more about the revolution in participatory news gathering
- Maybe try playing with the new Truemors site.
- Push your own news or information.
- Connect with local readers. Can this be a book club?

12. Blogging & RSS

- Yeah, blogging seems a no-brainer in the promotion of libraries! Doesn't every library have a half dozen blogs now? But vanilla blogging isn't enough.
- You need to make sure it's populated – probably by more than one voice. Ensure the words and tags are good for later discovery. Does the local press subscribe to your blog?
- Are you renovating or building a new library? It a real no-brainer to take a photo every day and engage your community in the project through your blog. Excitement builds – for staff too!
- Are you ready for picture blogs, video blogs, link blogs and more? All at once?
- Connect your blog to a city or institutional agenda (e.g. Chamber of Commerce / Board of Trade) for extra points.

13. SEO: Search Engine Optimization

- Learn how to do this or hire someone to. It's essential.
- Keep it up to date and make sure that your points of view end up in the major web conversations.
- Search your issues on all search engines (including maps) and make sure your services are discoverable in the big 5 search engines.

14. eSurveys – SurveyMonkey & Zoomerang

- Have you ever been marketed to through a survey? Let's take a tip from these marketers and ask our users to take a survey and use the results in our own interests. In the old days, user satisfaction surveys could be very expensive, especially on the results input and collation and charts and graphs creation. This is no longer the case using the online survey tools. With these tools it can be simple, fast and cheap.

15. LinkedIn / Plaxo

- Most reporters are there – are you?
- Get yourself connected beyond libraries and into new realms.
- Check these out in a political context (e.g. for candidates, bond votes, propositions, etc.)

Some Library Reasons for Doing Promotion

1. Generate positive feeling about the library
2. Increase use of the library.
3. Increase awareness of current library programs and services.
4. Increase awareness of new library programs and services.
5. Cause an action (e.g. return overdues, register, get a card).
6. Raise funds, get a new branch, support the library campaign, etc.
7. Achieve a political goal. (contact the mayor)

What can you offer with these 2.0 tools? First, you are information professionals and you'll need the format and container independence of this Millennium. You'll need to not only know how to use each, but also to search their trails, create alerts, develop search strategies and provide advice. We can use this in the interest of the public good and education for our communities. Our organizations exist in a socio-political context and it's a valid use of our time to actively scan the environment for threats and opportunities everywhere.

SirsiDynix has been providing portal solutions for a few years now that encourage the application of 2.0 tools and ideas in libraries – through EPS, Rooms, SchoolRooms and now Symphony. We will continue to improve these tools to ensure you have a full suite of options to succeed.

Either way, 2.0 is another great opportunity that costs little and breaks organizational inertia. Are we ready for greater success?

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