

MARKETING YOUR LIBRARY'S ONLINE RESOURCES



INSIDE

How to Build Awareness and Increase Usage of Your Library's Online Assets

GET PREPARED

Know your product.....	3
Know your customer	4
Make your library's resources easy to find ...	5
Speak your patrons' language online.....	8
Go get 'em!	8

GET THE WORD OUT

Seize opportunities in the library ..	9
Network, network, network	10
Meet the press	10
Advertise.....	12
Don't give up!	15

"University librarians are using text messaging, instant messaging and Second Life as everyday educational tools to hone students' online research skills. In the tech-driven 21st century, librarians' roles are evolving. Embracing Second Life is part of that process."

— Lorene Roy, President,
American Library Association,
in a letter to the editor of
USA Today, August 9, 2007

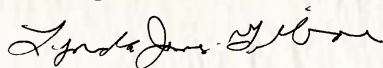
Dear Colleague:

Whether you're practiced at using Avatars on Second Life or a novice at advertising in the campus newspaper, we've summarized for you here many of the proven tips for marketing online resources to an academic community. Many students start and end research sessions with the Free Web. Our goal is to help you quickly convince students that there's a better-bet starting point for relevant, reliable, and vetted information: your library, and the databases and other e-resources your staff members have carefully matched to your students' needs.

Much published material exists on the hot-topic discipline of branding your library, so we won't cover that here. It matters less that you've undergone a formal branding exercise than if you simply focus on having your website reflect the same personality and patron experience you provide at the library. Every message to your target audience is an opportunity to also remind them that the library's information professionals have selected certain databases for investment based on close-hand knowledge of faculty and student needs. Building awareness of the skill of your librarians as you work to develop student research skills can be fertile ground for your proposals to school administration at budget time.

This text is divided into two sections. "Get Prepared" will help you make sure that, when students do reach your site, they'll have a good experience. Once prepared for their arrival, you'll want to "Get the Word Out" with some of the steps in the second section. Pick and choose from these suggestions based on your library's experience and needs, but it helps to hold off spreading the word until you're sure you're ready for prime time! Let's get started....

Wishing you success in marketing your library,



Lynda James-Gilboe
VP, Marketing & Customer Support
ProQuest



GET PREPARED

STEP 1.

Know Your Product

It's the classic first step in the basics of marketing. You can't market a product that you don't understand, so be sure you know the "ins and outs" of the databases your library holds. What information needs are they designed to serve? When would you recommend one as opposed to another? What makes them better than a general search engine? Can you effectively describe and demonstrate them for your students?

In Your Marketing Toolkit...

We've provided a menu of database descriptions and sample user guides on ProQuest.com (see "Library Advocacy" section). For use on your website or in fliers or newsletters, these items are meant to illustrate why students should move from Internet search engines to deeper research 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? Who might be an expert on those which are more discipline-specific? Share this knowledge so all staff can be an advocate for your electronic resources.



Pick some brains.

Which databases are staff 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 can get up and running faster. Borrow a trick from bookstores, where titles flagged as "staff picks" sell more. Choose your favorite resource, briefly explain why, and add your signature (picture too, if you want) for the personal touch. Post these picks on your website and by computer terminals in your library and watch usage go up. For extra oomph, have a student or faculty member contribute a short note on his or her favorite electronic resource, plus name and picture if willing. Be sure to rotate these "reviews" regularly. Then you can say with confidence that your databases are "student tested" and "instructor approved."

STEP 2

Know Your Customer

Product knowledge goes hand-in-hand with understanding the customer. We can safely say that all your students already use general search engines to do online research. And some students will only come into the library if directed by a faculty member or course assignment. Your task is to modify your patrons' behavior by proving that your mousetrap is better than the one they're using now, in ways that matter to them personally.

Look at your current student population ... you'll readily agree that freshmen are a special segment with different needs from upperclassmen. Try making a list of your customer segments, the ways your resources better meet their specific needs, and how you can make sure your community knows.

SAMPLE:

Incoming freshmen ... likely overwhelmed, need direction and instruction on using the library and conducting research. Messages should be clear, simple, and memorable—starting in new-student orientation packets but also repeated, given flood of information they receive in early months.

2nd and 3rd year students ... need more specific research help depending on course of study (information and training on databases pertinent to literature majors ... life science majors... history majors ...etc.)

Final year and grad students ... need help researching jobs or post-graduate schools, available grants, networking tools, etc.

Your students' needs might be different, but you get the idea—you're matching your language and approach to what they want, and you're identifying applications that will make your marketing message ring true. (We'll talk about faculty later, as influencers, but you might also want to list them as another market segment.)

Focus groups.

Assemble focus groups of students and faculty to discuss the library's website. Invite those who use the library and those who don't. Send invitations and follow-up until you've confirmed at least a dozen people. Have your discussion questions ready (broad, open-ended questions such as "what kind of questions do you use the Internet to answer?") and be prepared to demonstrate your website and its

resources. Encourage honest feedback and take notes. Keep your eyes open for particularly insightful participants (note that "insight" is different from "talkative"). Draw out those whose comments cause you to think "aha!" You might want to stay in touch with these participants as you develop your Web program. These are potential opinion-shapers and library advocates in your community.



If you're not sure what a specific segment wants, find out. Talk with students, faculty and others who use your library. Ask them about their interests, their frustrations with Internet searching, whether they use the library website, and what changes might make them use it more.

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



Make Your Library's Resources Easy to Find

Is your library website easy for non-librarians to find and use? Can they find and access the e-resources quickly? (The one-minute YouTube video "Finding Time in the Penn State Libraries" is a great illustration of the need for clear, easy navigation on a library website.) People have become attuned to self-service; they expect those services to be intuitive and quickly abandon those that are puzzling. If you want students to turn to your library first, and regularly, for their information needs, you must make sure they can get to your resources quickly and easily.

Let's start with the library's Web address. Is it as easy to remember as google.com, yahoo.com, ask.com, dogpile.com, etc.? Some academic library addresses do not feature

Quick field test!



Is it really that easy to find your homepage and online resources? Go to the nearest coffee shop and find a laptop volunteer who'll trade outspoken feedback for a latte. Have him find your library's homepage, and then the online resources. Take notes, and put any problems on a "fix" list. If you field test a handful of students, and the same items come up, that's your "must fix" list ... and treat yourself to a latte, hard as you work.

the word "library." If your address is not obvious, consider buying a domain name that matches what your students call the library.

Also consider ease of navigation to and from your college or university home page. Improving your "real estate" there might take negotiation, but since research skills are critical to student success, the library website should be prominent. And once on the library site, offer a quick way back to the school's main page.

ON WEBSITE DESIGN

Journal articles, seminars (and websites!) abound on the topic of effective website design. If we could boil current recommendations down into just a few, it would be these:

- Strive for clear navigation, in addition to a look that says “easy to use.” Try to restrict the number of links to databases and other e-resources to one click from your home page.
- Make your design appealing and current, through use of color and visuals. Try not to squeeze elements in or make them look jumbled.
- Align the library website design with that of the college or university, but don’t be a slave to

this. Take a different tack if it will serve ease of navigation or finding information.

- Do try for consistency from one department to the next within the library site.
- Google (perhaps taking a cue from early Macintosh and earlier Volkswagen advertising) adheres to simplicity and a white background, nicely offsetting its logo rendered in friendly LifeSavers® colors. Fans like to watch the way the logo is customized for holidays or times of year, adding to the personality of the site. Is there a simple way for you to add your library’s “persona” to your website?

Special note: Specific to library-related website design, Chicagolibrarian.com and librarian Leo Robert Klein maintain an excellent “recommendation service” for viewing best practices, innovations, and experiments being tried by your colleagues worldwide. Please take a minute to visit libSite at <http://libsite.org> and you’ll become a frequent visitor and—we hope—contributor.



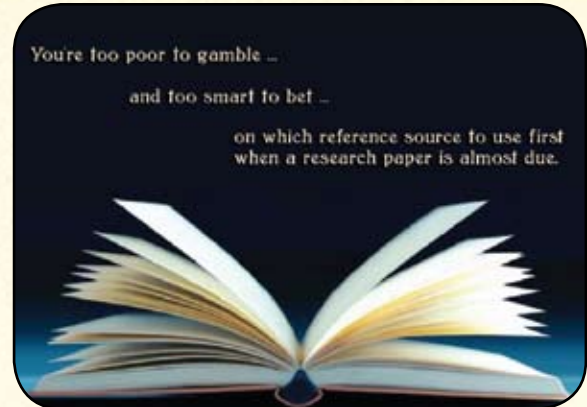
<http://libsite.org>

In Your Marketing Toolkit...

We've made it easier for you to arrange to include a promotion for your library's resources right on your school home page. The Flash "commercial" provided on ProQuest.com (see "Library Advocacy" section) can be downloaded to your home page. Students can click on it to learn about your library's online resources.

Once you have visitors on your home page, the gateway to your online resources should be bold and inviting, or otherwise obvious. Consider a click-through graphic that not only invites visitors but tells them what they'll find.

Since many Web users expect to see a search bar, consider implementing or highlighting a search application.



Library "commercial" waiting for your use on ProQuest.com

ENTER YOUR VIRTUAL LIBRARY:

Click here for free online resources that will help you answer research questions 24/7

Sample click-through graphic



STEP 4.

Speak Your Patrons' Language Online

Libraries are rife with industry jargon and systems that can confuse students (or make them feel unwelcome). Your library's Web gateway will likely be experienced remotely, with no librarian to guide the visitor. Speak your patrons' language online so they can navigate with ease.

Start with the basics: do students use "databases" or do they visit websites? If they don't use the word databases don't begin by describing them that way. Talk with students, show them the gateway, and ask if they understand what the label means. Ask if there's a better way to label the gateway.

Next, look at the labels for the resources. Is there simply a list of resources, such as "ABI Inform" or "RefWorks"? If so, it's likely students won't know what the titles mean. If you do use a product name, make sure you add a description of it in words your students will understand.

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."

In Your Marketing Toolkit...

Don't reinvent the wheel—use the brief ProQuest database descriptions we have provided on your library's website. These friendly, more 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 version in Word format on ProQuest.com (see "Library Advocacy" section).

Your choice of language even in the links and navigation tabs on your website can pull patrons toward the benefits the library offers. And a big opportunity lies in the method of searching. One example is the search feature on the **University of Toronto Libraries** website which invites "Let us recommend the best databases for your topic." Through a very few subsequent clicks, the website delivers exactly that.



<http://main.library.utoronto.ca>



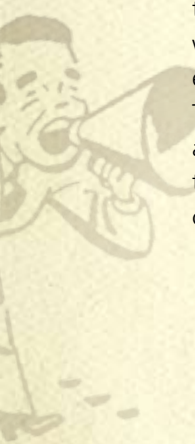
GET THE WORD OUT

STEP 1.

Seize Opportunities in the Library

You have a built-in audience every day at the library, and every encounter with students is an opportunity to teach them about your online resources.

Create brief, easy-to-read fliers that advertise your library's website. (Remember to use the messages you developed for your market segments in addressing their needs—see “Get Prepared: Step 2.”) Show a screen shot of your home page to build immediate recognition ... or of a particularly valuable feature or content area, to illustrate the benefit. Put fliers at the circulation desk and send one home with every student checking out a book. Keep a stack at the reference desk, as well.



Staff members at the reference desk are ideally placed to introduce your online resources as they help students with their questions. Encourage them to introduce the entire website, 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 promotional flier—done! See sample enclosed. You can customize and print your own file by accessing the version in Word format on ProQuest.com (see “Library Advocacy” section).

Where do students stop and linger on campus, or in the library? Watch for natural stopping points and take advantage of them to spread word of your online resources. A simple one-page flier or poster can attract attention and briefly summarize the needs that can be met. Post it in places where students can easily see it and have time to read it. Think non-traditional places like elevators and rest rooms as well as bulletin boards; don't forget the coffee shop and student union.

The concept of a library “display” might be low-tech, but they continue to prove effective. Go for humor by using cardboard stand-ups of celebrities who wear your poster as a billboard... your student focus group participants would have plenty of suggestions they'd call “cool” vs. “nerdy.”

These ideas are the tip of the iceberg, but they are basic marketing tools that will help you use every encounter with students as an opportunity to inform them of all of the research time-savers their library gives them online.



Sample flier



Network, Network, Network

Imagine that perfect day, when your staff personally demonstrates the library website and its electronic riches to every student on campus. 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. Faculty members are primary influencers for these groups; student clubs or associations could be, too. Introducing these influencers to the website is a great way to get THEM to spread the word to the people you want to reach.

When, where, and how can you reach them? Faculty might be best reached with an email about your online resources ... and an invitation to conduct a discipline-specific training session either in class or in the library. Student clubs or associations might be accessible through meetings, where you can demonstrate the website and its contents. Be prepared to take your show on the road, or identify power-user student “ambassadors” to do this for you. Armed with some talking points that you’ve supplied, these ambassadors will supply their own success stories and endorsement that will convince their peers to see for themselves.



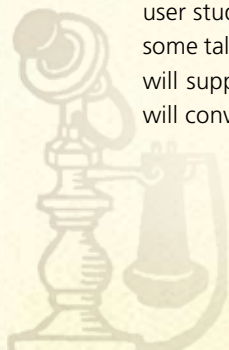
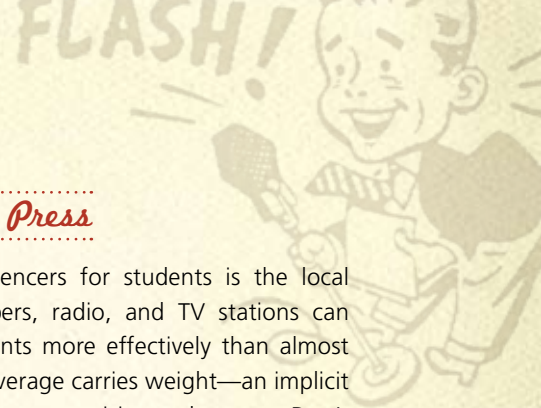
Meet the Press

One of the biggest influencers for students is the local media. Campus newspapers, radio, and TV stations can reach your market segments more effectively than almost any other source. Their coverage carries weight—an implicit endorsement—that can increase visits and usage. Don’t overlook or back down from these opportunities. In fact, make the opportunities happen.

First, make a list of the editors, reporters, 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.

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 her 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.





Court your reporter

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 students and can be accessed from their dorm rooms," etc.)

Info "goody bags" make meetings a treat

Your library is part of a larger network—a university administration, a business community, etc. Because of its information resources, libraries are in a unique position to serve these organizations. For example, while a librarian might already be attending administration meetings, you can boost the library's profile by bringing information "goody bags" for representatives from 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.

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.

We also supplied a simple chart on the advantages of using the library's treasures of the "hidden" Web vs. search engines like Google and Ask.com. This is a marketing tool that continues to be requested by our community college and university library customers; reporters might find it a helpful "backgrounder" as well.

Before you send the release, be sure you've identified a spokesperson at the library that 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.



Sample press release

STEP
4.

And the Classic: Advertise

Advertising can be expensive, but there are plenty of budget-conscious options. No matter what you're spending, your approach should be strategic—don't squander opportunities to talk with your market segments.

Start with your market/needs list developed in "Get Prepared: Step 2." What are the media reaching these segments? Radio stations, newspapers, newsletters, etc. Contact them to get their ad rates and schedules. Advertising salespeople can help you with good editorial matches to their content or programming. 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 market segments. An inexpensive piece of advertising real estate might be money ill spent if it doesn't reach the market segments you're seeking. Also, ask if your library qualifies for free space through the Ad Council or a radio PSA (public service announcement).

Next, develop the ad. For print: draft the copy first, with the appropriate market's 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. Or enlist the help of your school's marketing or communications department—perhaps there's an advertising class willing to take on library advertising as an assignment. 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.



Barter time for ad dollars

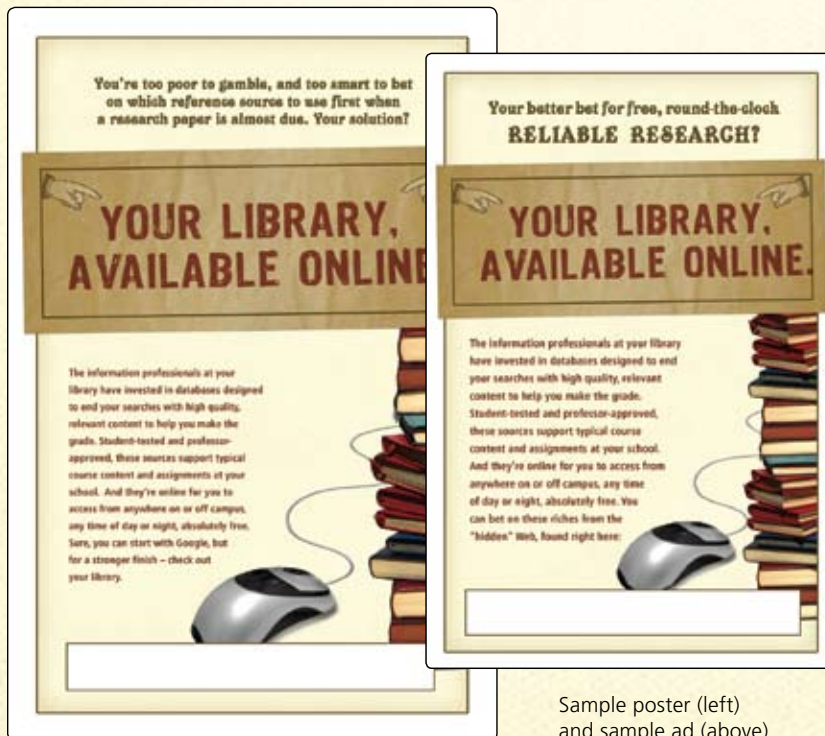
Some media (especially public radio and TV stations) will barter advertising time or space in return for research services. You have information professionals on staff who can do fact-checking or conduct research to support their reporting staff. Offer a trade for services before you spend.

Advertisement ... done! See sample ad and radio script in your toolkit. Add your library's pertinent information and go! Note that we have designed the ad to scale up to poster size as well, to give you more flexibility in promotional tools.

For often-used databases, consider a more detailed advertisement or Web promotion. Video is becoming a

more ubiquitous promotional tool, with the rapid growth of YouTube. Student interns from the information services or technology department would be a valuable resource to help you make quick history here.

For example, **Arizona State University** students have produced a fun 30-second spot to promote RefWorks—it's posted on YouTube for your viewing pleasure.



BE WHERE STUDENTS ARE

Once you have the basics down, consider using new technologies such as MySpace, Facebook and Second Life to reach students—which of course will less likely be new to them. Students are high-tech but have limited attention spans, so when planning content think impact vs. depth.

The **Brooklyn College Library MySpace** page, covered by Beth Evans in Library Journal's October 2006 netConnect, is a great illustration of the use of photos and video, contacts, blog, and workshop calendar. Barely a year old, the page will undergo redesign as a result of a student contest.

Another example: **San Jose State University** introduces its School of Library and Information Science faculty who are present on Second Life to students. You can view this under two-minute clip via YouTube.

Blogs are handy ways for students to chat with librarians when they can't make it into the library, and for librarians to mention new databases or subscriptions—among other uses. Wikis can be useful for groups to share documents, as illustrated by **Ohio University Libraries BizWiki** and by the **University of Connecticut's** library staff wiki. Both of these library wikis can be viewed by visiting <http://libsit.org>, the library website recommendation service we mentioned earlier in this how-to guide.

And, finally, events such as gaming nights are fun ways to pull non-library users into the library. Overall, marketing specialists would advise you to "go where the audience is"—physically, mentally, emotionally. Once there, it's an easy way for your audience to learn more about the riches your library provides.



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.

Continued inspiration can be found on websites like these:

- **ALA Academic and research library campaign**
<http://www.ala.org/ala/pio/campaign/academicresearch/academicresearch.htm>
- **Dowd, Nancy. The 'M' word: Marketing libraries (blog)**
<http://themwordblog.blogspot.com/>
- **Klein, Leo Robert. libSite (blog)** <http://libsite.org>
- **Stover, Jill. Library marketing: Thinking outside the book (blog)**
<http://librarymarketing.blogspot.com>
- **Willen Brown, Stephanie. CogSci Librarian (blog)**
<http://cogscilibrarian.blogspot.com/search/label/marketing>



789 E. Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346
U.S.A.



Companion materials
and customizable templates
can be found on the
Library Advocacy section
of www.proquest.com.

