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Being Earnest With Collections-If I Had a Nickel for Every Time I'm Asked for a Bookmark, I'd Be Rich

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Being Earnest with Collections — If I Had a Nickel for Every Time I'm Asked for a Bookmark, I'd be Rich

by **Jennifer Albers-Smith** (Sr. Manager, Global Campaigns and Programs, ProQuest) <Jennifer.albers-smith@proquest.com>

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Column Editor's Note: *I began in my role as Head of Resource Acquisition & Discovery at The University of Alabama two years ago. A decision was made in the first few months to explore the idea of marketing library resources out of the newly formed department. Many changes have been made to the program since it began, including more staffing, expanded focus and new ways to promote library resources across a large research institution. The marketing program was featured in this column, and I gave a presentation on its progress and accomplishments during the 2017 Annual Conference of the American Library Association in Chicago. The excitement and popularity of the marketing program has resulted in several new initiatives that are benefited by collaboration with our vendors. Building on that collaboration, I am pleased to feature an article by Jennifer Albers-Smith from ProQuest. I have known Jennifer for several years and consider her a friend and outstanding professional. Her article provides a good overview of the type of marketing services vendors can provide. Her team is obviously interested in improving return on investment and raising awareness of ProQuest products among their customer base.*

*Marketing is one important example of the value-added services vendors and publishers can provide to libraries. I always encourage my librarian colleagues to develop a strong network of go-to colleagues at publishers and vendors. Their expertise and willingness to help libraries can have a positive impact on library efforts to improve outreach and promote the value of library provided resources. In fact, during my years as an academic librarian, I have been part of numerous initiatives involving library-vendor cooperation and these efforts from the vendor side have helped the library focus on the goal of **Being Earnest with Collections**. I want to thank my friend Jennifer for taking the time to provide ATG readers with a brief overview of the services her team provides to customers of ProQuest. I am sure this will give libraries some ideas of how to reach out to publishers/vendors to seek assistance with marketing library resources. — MA*

Since 2006, I've been working in the library community in marketing and sales roles for various vendors. I've had the good fortune to work with many libraries, fielding their requests for tools and collateral that enable them to market to patrons.

What has been requested the most in my dozen years in the library industry? Bookmarks! Can you believe it? We've supplied them in the thousands, millions even. And every time we did, I wished we were doing something more valuable for our customers. Bookmarks are not going to improve your cost per use (CPU) or show you return on investment. Bookmarks are for patrons who are already in your library checking something out.

In 2015, I got my wish: I came to **ProQuest** and built a team that does more than make bookmarks; we provide a professional marketing service which we call Marketing On Demand. Marketing experts on my team meet with librarians, discuss their end users' needs, the library's goals and mission, share marketing best practices, and build customized digital tools. Our hope is that through education about digital marketing, we can help librarians use their (usually limited) marketing resources to reach a wider audience, an audience that doesn't already frequent their library.

So what do we tell our librarian partners?

Your Library is a Business

Approach marketing your library as you would a business. You are being asked to improve CPU and demonstrate ROI. Your students and faculty are your customers. The more they use your library and are satisfied with its services, the more indispensable you will become. And what comes with indispensability? Budget and resources. So, sit down with your team and document the resources that have the greatest

impact on student and faculty success. That requires sifting through your hundreds or thousands of resources — not an easy task. Once you've completed that challenge, document the ways in which you can reach your students and faculty: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, library website, blog, student newspaper, signs in study halls or in dorms, email to faculty, student newsletter, etc. What are all the ways your students learn about campus activities and news? What connections do you have as employees to those other channels? Marketing is about networking and putting yourself in front of where people already are.

Focus on Your Users

Librarians have told me they are hesitant to promote certain resources on their website or that their recommendation will bias a student towards a specific resource. While this approach is fair and places all resources on equal footing, I ask you instead to see your students and faculty as busy, flawed people. They don't have time to look through resources. Or don't want to take the time. Or they may not know that the library has the resources they need. I'm reminded of a dinner I had with two librarians from a medium-sized institution three years ago at the **Charleston Conference** who were directly opposed to this approach. They were filled with disdain at the idea of helping guide students to the right resources and tools; "they need to learn how to do research the right way; we're not going to help make it easier for them." Sure, we all want ideal customers. But our customers are real people. Researchers are real people. And if you want your library to become indispensable, figure out how these people work and meet them where they are with the tools they need.

Leverage all of Your Staff's Expertise

Several years ago, at the **Canadian Society for Eighteenth Century Studies** conference, I was speaking to a prominent faculty member from a very large institution, and he said to me: "Write down for me which of your collections my library has. When I go to the website, I see hundreds, and I don't even know where to begin." That off-the-cuff request led to the creation of a customized research guide to the library's collections — hugely successful in building usage among faculty and students. (We're still leveraging that idea: my team built a research guide with **McGill University** this year for marketing to their faculty.)

The librarians staffing your research desks, teaching your classes, and meeting with faculty and students know the questions students are asking, they know faculty research areas and the types of problems they are trying to solve. Use this intelligence to build your library marketing programs. The staff on the library floor hear things that you may not. I value my staff for the on-the-ground experience they have and leverage the expertise each brings to move our team in a cohesive, forward-thinking direction. Spend time with your team, identify and rank the biggest problems your users face, and then, use this intelligence as a starting off point for marketing your library.

Build your Audience with Social

At **ProQuest** we invest in social marketing because it's where we meet both our customers and our users. And it's where your students and faculty are, too. They may not be in your library or visiting your library website, but they are using social to talk to their friends and family, reading the news, viewing the latest trends, checking sports scores, etc. Building a social audience of faculty and students at your institution can be a critical component in successfully marketing your library.

We've built expertise in social media marketing — a Twitter handle with more than 26,000 followers, a Facebook page with equally impressive stats, and a blog that's projected to secure more than 105,000 views in 2017. Along the way we've learned that an effective social program requires a small budget for social advertising. The great news about social: you can instantly see ROI and improvement in CPU. For example, you

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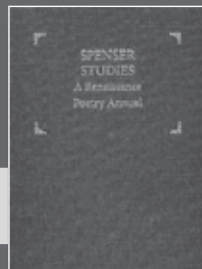


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can measure database use before and after you run a campaign, compare it to the impressions and click performance of your ad campaign, et voila! A small investment can bring instant results. The keys are timing (reviewing the academic calendar) and content (what matters to your students), supported with the user intelligence I mentioned previously.

My team not only provides our library partners with posts, they provide guidance on how to build audiences, how to target students and faculty at your institution, and how to test ads and modify them as needed. Social advertising is exceptionally flexible: you can quickly evaluate performance and edit to get better engagement. And if you start using "Ads Manager" in Facebook, you'll have access to a lot of tools, including a Facebook Ad rep who can help you improve your ads even further.

Test, Test, Test

Not every campaign my team and I run is successful. And to expect everything we do to be successful is unrealistic. But what we do is test. We start small. If it's working, we invest more money and resources. Here's a sample test you might run:

- Identify a key problem your students are facing where the library can help.
- Build a small social campaign around it.
 - Identify the best and most engaging writer on your team and ask them to craft a short "how-to" for solving the problem. Keep it approachable and interesting by answering the most frequently asked questions; provide guidance.
 - Post it to your website with links to the best library databases that will solve that problem.
 - Now, post that piece on Twitter and Facebook and put \$50-\$100 towards an ad campaign targeting the right audience for three days.

- Evaluate performance.
 - If it performed well, and your cost per click is under \$1.00, put more money behind it to reach a wider audience and go bigger. Build an integrated (i.e., multifaceted) campaign.
 - Turn that "how to" into an infographic or checklist and post it in the dorms or in study halls, put a link or image on your main website, email it out to your faculty to share with their students, ask them to post it in their LMS. What other channels are available to you? Student newspaper? Retweet from the institution's main handle? Be creative and build relationships outside the library.
- Keep the momentum going. Pick the next most asked-about topic and test again. And again and again. This is what we call content marketing. Instead of outright promotion of resources, you are building a marketing plan that promotes the thought leadership and expertise your library offers.

What if it flops? This could be a result of a few different reasons. Was the writing concise, jargon-free, and easy for your audience to understand? Did you pull out the most important quote or tip from the article and feature it in your social campaign? You need to capture their attention immediately so they will click. Was the timing appropriate? Was your piece about a problem that most people face during exam time, but you ran the campaign at the beginning of the semester? Take a critical eye to the campaign so you can continue to improve and keep going! Encourage your team to take risks. Sometimes it takes a few small failures to build something great.

Start Small, Get Momentum

Every librarian we talk to wants to market their library effectively, and every one of them is trying to do so with minimal resources. Good news: it can be done. Build a small plan; execute on that plan for a short period of time, say 3-4 months. Show its impact on CPU year over year

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Biz of Acq — Print Journals at a Regional University Library

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My institution, **Eastern Michigan University**, is a typical public regional comprehensive that every state has. We are not an **ARL** member. When I started at the library 24 years ago, we were receiving over 2000 print subscriptions: this included a print subscription to every magazine in *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. We had 523 microform subscriptions. My staff included three full-time clericals who did serial check-in and one clerical responsible for commercial and in-house binding. We were sending a minimum of 100 volumes to be bound twice per month. We had an entire large room dedicated to holding our print newspaper collection.

Where are we today? We spend over 90% of our acquisitions budget on electronic resources, most of that for journal content. Like our peer libraries, we subscribe to many of the “big deal” packages: **Elsevier, Wiley, Springer-Nature, Taylor & Francis, Sage, Oxford, Cambridge, Duke, Project Muse, Emerald, and JSTOR**. This allowed us to swap our print holdings for electronic access. Additionally we had a stretch of flat budgets that forced major print journal cancellations.

Still we continue to need and purchase some print journals. What is our criteria? This is what I discovered in analyzing our print subscriptions:

1) Journals that are not part of a big deal agreement. Virtually every year a few of our print titles are absorbed into one of the deals. We also have had a number of titles migrate into **Project Muse**. We will cancel the print when we have electronic access.

2) Journals that are not available in reliable aggregator. These titles come and go so it takes some monitoring. Last year a core nutrition journal dropped out of a database after a dispute with the publisher. We had to reinstate our subscription.

3) Journals where the html or pdf “text-only” aggregator versions are not adequate. Illustrations are important for some fields such as art (*Architectural Digest*) and fashion (*Vogue*).

4) Journals where the aggregator embargo periods are not reasonable. For some expensive titles a six-month embargo is not preferred but may be necessary. Almost all of the *Readers' Guide* magazines have been cancelled as they have reasonable embargos.

5) Journals that are available in print only. Print is still the only format for some culinary/art/music/education society memberships. These independent titles support niche programs that **EMU** has that may not be offered widely elsewhere.

6) Journals that include misleading “online.” One of our titles has a rolling current plus one-year access. If we didn't keep the print, we would not have anything after the second year. Others have print + “digital” access. The library market is a miniscule part of the publisher's business model: they are set up for individual, not institutional

subscribers. They offer a username and a password to log in. This is useless to us as we want IP authentication for easy access for all of our patrons. Some include supplementary electronic newsletters, but the main publication is still the print.

7) Journals that demand a print subscription in order to get online access.

8) Journals where we can't afford a site license. We do subscribe to *JAMA, Nature, and Science*. We have tried to negotiate a site-license for some other classics, but the pricing is sometimes based on our FTE as a regional comprehensive university and not the actual number of people in the program that would likely read it.

We tally all bound and unbound print journal usage: the journals must show a pattern of usage to justify their expenditure.

Print may be more relevant for **EMU** than other institutions for another reason: we are very fortunate to have an automatic storage and retrieval system device for on-site storage of our older resources. We do not have the space concerns facing many of our peers. We do need to purchase the backfiles of journals (nor do we generally have funds available to do so), so our old print will remain important.

As of 2017 we are down to 114 print only, 99 print + online (digital), and 84 individual online subscriptions. We are sending 50 volumes to be bound once per month and only have five microform subscriptions. We are down to five of the classic *Readers' Guide* titles. The newspaper room has been repurposed as we are down to four current newspapers.

Our staff now? Our one clerical staff, who did check-in plus bindery, government documents, loose-leaf services, but he just retired in August, so his duties will be absorbed within the other Technical Services staff. We migrated from Voyager to Alma this spring so we are still working on procedures. There has been the mantra by some librarians to “stop check-in, stop claiming, stop binding” print, but our collection has been manageable, even with a reduced staff.

In informal chats with colleagues at the **NASIG Conference** in Indianapolis and **ALA Conference** in Chicago this summer, none of the librarians said that they have stopped receiving print. As with books, print is still here for the foreseeable future but in much smaller quantities than in the past. 🌱



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for that same time period; compare clicks from your campaign to usage. With every success, ask for a little more money. Keep your asks small, but frequent. Over time, you can build a budget. Every year I've been in marketing I fight for my marketing budget; I encourage you to devote the time to test marketing programs at your library. My experience has

shown me that a little marketing goes a long way, and the payoff in usage and outreach will be well worth the effort.

Any marketing questions or need some advice? Please don't hesitate to reach out. 🌱

