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Using Slide Shows to Engage Patrons with Library Resources

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Using Slide Shows to Engage Patrons with Library Resources

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Many libraries these days rely on the free promotional opportunities presented by social media. Albertsons Library at Boise State is no exception; however, we have found that we can extend the outreach capabilities of social media by using the same themes, images and/or messages on a slide show that runs on all the computers in the library, as well as a monitor in the library lobby. This article will examine concepts in user engagement and branding as the foundation to the successful use of this marketing tool, and also offer tips specific to setting up and designing your own slideshow.

Know your audience

Prior to creating your slide show, you have to have some idea of your audience in order to use themes, images, and wording that will not only resonate with them, but motivate them to engage with your library resources and services. At Albertsons Library an array of user profiles have been assembled through the university demographic statistics, a biannual LibQual survey, and careful attention to the library's social media networks. Because Albertsons Library has thriving accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, and its blog, we have a large audience with which to conduct our informal surveys and form assorted user profiles.

Brand Identity

Another important aspect of user engagement with your slide show, or any marketing effort, is the creation of a consistent look and feel to all of a user's experiences with your institution, from space to signage to marketing. This consistency helps create your library brand, a subconscious association with a particular set of characteristics. At Albertsons Library, our brand is connected to our mission "to actively engage in learning, teaching and research at Boise State University," and is exemplified in the library's service orientation, flexibility, and leadership in mobile technologies and

e-learning. At Boise State, any marketing initiatives must also consider the brand standards of the university, which decree particular fonts, colors and use of the logo. By integrating the library's brand characteristics with the university brand standards, Albertsons Library has created a cohesive look and feel to not only its slide programs, but also its signage and its social media posts. This cohesiveness is further supported through the use of a shared Google calendar that outlines key outreach opportunities and themes for each month. We often use the same theme or image for social media postings, book displays, and our slide programs, slightly tweaked to appeal to the audiences for each.

In addition to the planning and scheduling afforded by our shared calendar, Albertsons Library has found the need to establish a general policy about the slide content, which simply states that slide content must be directly tied to the library mission. This policy has become increasingly important as the slides have been noticed by other university groups who want to advertise their events and resources. By allowing only those slides that are directly associated in some way with the library, we have avoided having our message crowded out or diluted. By collaborating with groups who share the library's goals, running slides for such programs as the Summer Research Institute, the Act Now Project (a week-long event centered on diversity education) and the university's Welcome Week committee, we establish the library as an essential collaborator in teaching, learning and research at Boise State.

It might sound limiting to allow only slide themes associated with the library's mission, but we have found that with a little creativity almost any sort of holiday or theme can be connected to the library. For example, December 5th is National Ninja Day, which we used to promote our resources connected to the science of body movement in the Kinesiology library guide. December is also the month for Festivus, the holiday initiated by George Costanza's father on the TV sitcom Seinfeld, which we used to promote our Philosophy library guide. International Beer Day occurs August 1st, and while we don't want to promote alcohol use on campus, we can certainly question the health benefits of beer and direct our users to the Health Sciences Library guide.

Technology

Compared to everything involved with the planning and scheduling of the slide program at Albertsons Library, the technology involved has been minimal. The library's innovative IT team, who excel at using existing tools to provide new services, make use of Microsoft ScreenSaver and the library's networked computers to get the show up and running. IT set up remote access to the network on my desktop, so I can

quickly and easily edit the slides. The only investment made for the slide program beyond manpower was in the purchase of a digital photo frame that we use in the library lobby, and a Raspberry Pi, a credit card sized computer that allows us to connect the frame to WiFi in the library. This gives the slide editors remote access and easy editing capabilities. We use PowerPoint to design the slides, then save each slide as a JPEG so that it will run on Microsoft Screensaver.

Finding Images

When it comes to finding images that you are legally able to use in your slide show, first consider your own institutional photo services or archives. Then you might look to Flickr's Creative Commons, the Library of Congress, Microsoft Images, or institutional collections such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. If you'd like to use pictures of celebrities, take a look at Wikimedia Commons. In any case, be sure to attribute your images correctly; Creative Commons recommends the inclusion of the title of the work, its author and the rights grantor. They outline recommended attribution practices on their site <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/us/>.

Connecting to users

Picture your user when considering images. For example, when we created a slide commemorating Elvis week, we chose an image of two Elvis impersonators with a young man who looked to be our typical undergraduate. We were able to connect Elvis Week to our resources with this heading, "Wise men say, Only fools rush into their research. Contact your librarian first!" Make sure you're considering the diversity of your users when choosing images. By seeing themselves depicted in library marketing, patrons may feel more comfortable in your library. Honor that diversity by including holidays in your slideshows that appeal to non-majority groups such as Chinese New Year (connected to our eHRAF World Cultures database), LGBT History Month (connected to our Boise Gay Life collection), or Spunky Old Broads Month (connected to our Gender Studies library guide).

Of course, another basic consideration in choosing themes for your slideshows is user need, so technology features largely in the slideshows at Albertsons Library, as does social media. We also take advantage of our slideshow to toot our own horn, such as when our librarians or programs earn awards. When our Facebook account hit 1,000 users we made sure to run a slide saying so, and thanking our users for their support.

Be aware of contemporary culture and use it in your slides to engage your users. Neil Gaiman is a popular author, and an avid supporter of libraries, so we found a photograph of him with a young man at a book-signing event to use with the Gaiman quote, "I'm very, very certain that without libraries I wouldn't have the career that I have had" for National Library Week. Memes can be a fun way to catch users' attention, but must be used carefully as they have short lives. A while back a Ryan Gosling meme was making the rounds of social media which included his picture and the phrase, "Hey girl..." followed by a statement of the things he would do for her. We used the meme to advertise our phone chargers, and it got a lot of attention at that time, but the slide will have to be retired after one use because the meme has run its course.

Assessment

Once you have your slideshow up and running you should consider how you might assess its success. While we have no formal assessment in place for our slide program, Albertsons Library can answer affirmatively to the following evaluative questions:

- Do users stop to look at the slides?
- Do users act based upon what they see in the slides?
- Do users refer to the slides?
- Do others want to be included in the slideshow?

Because the digital monitor is positioned between the Circulation and Reference desks, it's easy to see that users do stop to watch the Albertsons Library slides. In one example of a user motivated to action by a slide, a student went to Special Collections to ask to see the Gay Life collection, which, the student noted, she had not known about before seeing the slide. Users refer to the Albertsons Library slides in their interactions with library staff, as in the case of the student who e-mailed me for more information about a research program she had seen on a slide. Plus, the library regularly considers requests from other campus groups who want to be a part of our slideshow. Although these assessments are informal, they offer sufficient evidence for Albertsons Library to believe that the slideshow is an essential and effective component of our outreach efforts.

RESOURCES FOR CREATING YOUR SLIDESHOW

- A slide show that beautifully exemplifies its message on design on the Librarian Design Share site <http://librariandesignshare.org/tag/design-principles/>

- This blog post on branding, marketing and usability is geared toward health & human services professionals, but key concepts certainly apply to all <http://www.openminds.com/market-intelligence/executive-briefings/answer-lies-usability.htm/>
- Aaron Schmidt's fabulous all-encompassing take on usability for the library is expressed in his blog <http://www.walkingpaper.org/> as well as his new book, *Useful, Usable, Desirable*.
- Scot Sterling includes lots of useful examples of good graphic design on his blog Library Graphic Design <http://librarygraphicdesign.blogspot.com/>

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