

# EFFECTIVE LIBRARY PROMOTION: EMPOWERING PATRONS TO DISCOVER AND CREATE

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## THE CENTRAL MESSAGE

Libraries are in need of redefinition to prove that they are more than the sum of their collections and services. Libraries have a great opportunity to promote themselves as a community platform, a dynamic and innovative space where creative and intellectual ideas take shape and are shared with the world. There are three components to presenting this view of the library: redefining the library's face, presenting the library as a platform, and promoting this platform by tailoring the library's voice.

As always, the library's mission and community are essential to creating policies and plans. The message chosen to promote the library will inevitably influence the tools selected for

marketing and outreach. The tools presented here were chosen to represent a broad spectrum of library types, and would be easily adaptable to a more focused mission. This overall approach would be most useful to public, school, and academic libraries rather than special libraries and archives.

The central message of this outreach strategy is that a library is a place for discovery and creation—a place where creative and intellectual works can be produced, shared, and consumed. As a community center with two-way outreach, the library itself can become something that is being created and discovered.

## THE LIBRARY'S FACE

### One-Pager

<http://influx.us/onepager/>

Interacting with a library's Web page is how many people first encounter the library and its services. In many ways, the Web page is how a library makes its first impression—it is a patron-discovered tool, and in this way, a library marketing opportunity. If a library's Web page is not usable or makes a bad impression, all marketing endeavors will be an uphill battle (Connaway, Dickey, & Radford, 2011). One-Pager is a Web design template that has been heavily tested for usability and simplicity, is

easily customizable with different themes, and is designed with mobile users in mind. Having mobile friendly design is key, in that Internet traffic is moving from Web browsers to mobile devices (Anderson & Wolf, 2010). This also helps integrate QR codes into library promotion and functions.

### eXtensible Catalog

<http://www.extensiblecatalog.org/>

Libraries themselves are community centers and have been restricted by product developers in letting them develop tools for their patrons'

needs. With open source catalogs, developers from within the patron and library communities can collaborate to create something awesome for their library and share it with other libraries. This allows them to be liberated from product limitations and offer patrons the best tools and social media options. “Librarians see a golden opportunity [with open source] to add features to a system that will take years for a proprietary vendor to develop” (Yang & Hofmann, 2010). With open source a group could create a catalog plug-in to use data from Goodreads or Amazon linked with library catalog info within the library site. This idea is important because if your library cannot provide elegant services and patron desired tools it cannot be marketed. A libraries tools just like their web site are key aspects of marketing library offerings. For an

example of XC in use see: *Joining an Open Source Community: Creating a Symphony Connector for the XC NCIP Toolkit* (Suranofsky, 2011).

### QR Codes

QR codes are useful in many forms of library promotions and operation. Library posters, pamphlets, handouts and even library t-shirts can make use of QR codes to make the library more accessible and appealing. They can help with library operation in aiding patrons in many ways like linking displays to information, helping patrons find their way through the stacks or helping patrons reserve rooms (Pulliam & Landry, 2011). QR codes help people take parts of the library with them.

## THE LIBRARY AS PLATFORM

### Tools to Discover and Create

Libraries have traditionally offered information resources that allow people to discover idea and information and they have also made various creative tools available for patron use. These physical and digital tools need to be available in order to transform the library into a place of discovery and creation, allowing the public to use them to bring ideas to fruition and add to the creative and intellectual capital of the community. Not all of these resources will be available to all libraries but should be considered by those with larger budgets.

Examples include:

- Books, periodicals, journals, films, and music in physical and digital formats
- 3D Printers <http://www.makerbot.com/>
- Open-Access repository platforms, such as Greenstone (<http://www.greenstone.org/>) and Omeka (<http://omeka.org>)
- EBM (Espresso Book Machine) <http://ondemandbooks.com/>
- Audio/Video equipment and lab
- Laptops and tablet computers
- Study rooms and creative rooms/art supplies
- Video conferencing suites

## THE LIBRARY'S VOICE

### Twitter

<http://www.twitter.com>

The wildly popular communications platform is an absolutely crucial component of any library's social and marketing presence. Users in a 2.0 world expect not only real-time updates, but a

conversation. We see in Stuart (2010) that libraries can use Twitter to follow users and solicit authentic interactions, thus highlighting the library's online presence, making users aware of local library services, and pushing information and solutions that the library can

provide, all without users having to initiate the communication.

### **Facebook**

<http://www.facebook.com>

Having an institutional Facebook page is de rigeur among libraries wanting a free and easy way to have wide exposure to and feedback from its users. Fully 41% of Americans have personal Facebook profiles, and those that connect to your library's page can be kept updated with your library's upcoming events, blog posts, and videos (King, 2011). Embedded librarians in supplemental instruction roles have used Facebook pages to collaborate with faculty and reach students where they already spend a significant amount of time (Haycock & Howe, 2011).

Another potential use of a library's Facebook page is to highlight (with permission) the creative or intellectual work produced by users, strengthening the bond between library and user while simultaneously showcasing the capacity for creation in the library.

### **Hootsuite**

<http://www.hootsuite.com>

Hootsuite is a Web-based tool that integrates social media services like Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, and YouTube into one tool that can be customized and used to follow different feeds through one interface. It also allows for proactive reference and out reach by scanning posts for keywords and allow librarians to bring library resources to the patron. Hootsuite can also provide a library with feedback about how their social media tools are being used. For more information, check out a HootSuite review from PC Magazine (Yakal, 2011).

### **Wordpress**

<http://www.wordpress.com>

Possibly the most popular choice among bloggers who want a free, easy-to-use, and highly customizable blogging platform and content management system (CMS), Wordpress has a number of uses in libraryland

(Jones & Alida-Farrington, 2011). Much like it can with a Facebook page, a library can keep users abreast of upcoming events, highlight library collections and services, and showcase (with permission) creative and intellectual work of patrons. Blogs, however, afford the library a longer form for more in-depth exploration of topics than might be appropriate for short-form communication like Twitter and Facebook, and they also provide a "social hub" for the library--a center for content creation and community interaction that can push content to other social tools.

### **Foursquare | Yelp | Flickr**

<https://foursquare.com/> | <http://www.yelp.com/> | <http://flickr.com>

These three services represent a small sampling of Web 2.0 tools that can help improve a library's online presence. Services like Yelp and Foursquare are becoming primary tools for users looking for recommended restaurants and services, while Flickr allows users to host photos and them in a robust online community. These relatively low-maintenance tools can be integrated into mash-ups that increase the library's exposure and give the library a human element (Stephens, 2006).

### **YouTube**

<http://www.youtube.com>

YouTube dominates online viral marketing capabilities and potential for low cost advertising. many nonprofit institution take advantage of YouTube but few do it well (Waters, Jones, 2011). Libraries can create their own videos or create contests allowing patron participation by creating some content guidelines similar to the social media guidelines for message, identity and tone and following six basic rules viral rules like; the video should tell a story, it should be brief, contain as much information as possible, be relevant to the patrons, tell them what they should do at the end of the video, and be genuine (Waters & Jones, 2011). This can help a library strengthen their identity, include patrons, and market their services.

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