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Library Marketing and Communications



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OLAQ Guest Editor

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Introduction

Oregon libraries provide an incredible array of resources and services, but sometimes we struggle to educate our users and each other about all that is available. Over the past several years, many libraries have become more intentional in our efforts to market and promote our offerings, through traditional PR and advertisements as well as newer approaches like social media. However, we may lack the formal training and expertise to do this well—marketing is not a class offered in all library school programs—and, even with appropriate training, we may lack the budget and staff to implement a large-scale marketing program.

This issue of the *OLA Quarterly* focuses on library marketing and communications in Oregon libraries. As the Communications and Outreach Librarian at Portland State, I was curious to know how libraries in Oregon are tackling these issues. How are we learning new skills and approaches to communicating with stakeholders? What has worked, and what hasn't? What's changed over the past few decades? Who are our audiences and how do we best communicate with them?

To begin to answer these questions, we have excellent contributions from writers at large and small public and academic libraries throughout Oregon, and beyond.

Fundraising is an increasingly important part of library budgets. Portland State University Library Dean Marilyn Moody focuses on communications with donors, from cultivating and stewarding relationships to understanding their interest in your library. These relationships can last decades and provide great value both to the library and the donor.

Kate Lasky from Josephine Community Libraries writes about the foundations for success in marketing: branding and an integrated communications plan. Even with a small budget, consistency in branding can lead to more effective results.

Washington County Cooperative Library Services garnered significant community support with the successful passage of a library services levy in November 2015. Ross Fuqua



discusses the complex situation for the library, which, bound by Oregon election laws, could share information about the proposed levy but not advocate a position. The number and diversity of libraries in WCCLS made this even more challenging.

Paula Walker from Tigard Library reflects on a similar effort in 2002, when Tigard voters supported the construction of a new library building. Much has changed in 14 years, and this article provides an excellent overview of those changes. Similarly, Diane Sotak discusses the evolution of her role at the library at the University of Portland. In 2002, she initiated marketing efforts by focusing on the somewhat “haphazard” promotion of library services according to the academic year calendar; more recently, she has shifted to longer-term, strategic planning.

The University of Oregon Libraries has a new marketing team. Lesli Larson, Jason Stone, and Mandi Garcia share how they came together as a centralized communications department as well as some of the excellent projects and campaigns they have implemented over the past two years. In the following article, their colleagues Tatiana Bryant and Jonathan O. Cain write about engaging the campus and local communities through diverse public programs.

One of our out-of-state contributors, Clarissa Mansfield from Western Washington University, writes about the value of stories in library marketing. She offers several excellent examples of how we can “show” rather than “tell” what’s happening in our libraries.

While our communication efforts often focus on external audiences, especially patrons and donors, Shawn Cunningham at Multnomah County Library reminds us of the importance of internal communications. We should be as mindful of communicating with colleagues as we are about communicating with users. Multnomah County Library recently filled a position focused on internal communications, and Shawn shares some early lessons.

The final article in this issue draws from a 2014 OLA Conference presentation. Rajesh Singh, assistant professor of library and information science at St. John’s University in New York, presented on and now writes about brand advocacy and content marketing for libraries.

We are pleased to have such a compelling range of contributors to this issue of *OLA Quarterly*. As libraries, we are still learning how best to communicate with our stakeholders. I hope this issue helps us learn from each other.

Finally, I would be remiss not to take a moment to thank *OLA Quarterly* Coordinator Charles Wood, whose patience, persistence, and attention to detail are greatly appreciated.

