



The electronic newsletter
with marketing ideas for
information professionals.

compliments of...
Chris Olson & Associates

A Note From Chris

A library newsletter can invoke a love-hate relationship. You love the visibility but dread the time required to produce it. Our lead article offers quick pointers and resources to help your newsletter production efforts.

If you're ready to have your logo or a graphic embroidered onto cloth items, we give you the benefit of our experience in the Promotion Gems article: [Working with an Embroidery Company](#).

A few months ago a colleague called to ask if we knew where she could find library license plates. We didn't know the answer then, but we have since found two state libraries that have blazed the trail. Read about the Texas and New York State specialty library plates in [Pearls of Wisdom](#).

Look for our next issue May 18th, when our feature article will discuss the use of color in branding.

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Chris Olson'.

Chris Olson
Publisher

So You Want To Publish A Newsletter...

Ok, you've been thinking about creating a newsletter for your library or perhaps you're evaluating the one you currently publish. Before you move forward with either course of action, there are a few things you may wish to consider. Let's start by going back to the basics of newsletters.

The Purpose of Your Newsletter

Before you put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard, you have some decisions to make about your newsletter. First of all, what is its purpose or mission? Do you envision it to be a learning resource? library activity updater? topical information distribution channel? The answer will determine whether your newsletter will be a communications tool or an actual service product of the library. Making this differentiation is important. In order to keep the message of your publication crisp and clear, your newsletter must be one orientation or the other. So what will it be, communications tool or service product?

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The Service Product Newsletter

A service product newsletter is part of your library's product line-up. Like the self-service research products or other services your library offers, this type of newsletter is meant to educate and inform with a focused approach. Articles fall within a prescribed range of topic coverage. We consider service product newsletters to be written information briefings with a clearly defined target market or group of library customers in mind. This type of newsletter does not have generic articles, but instead may have news, features, Q&A, how-to, and tips for using information resources in a particular subject area, critical issue, or timely topic.

For example, the newsletters published by many investment companies are products focusing on investment advice and insights into business markets. A public library with individuals in the community who home school their children, could publish a newsletter targeting this market segment with information about home schooling issues, resources, trends, events, product reviews and other information focusing only on the home schooling topic. If your newsletter is to be a library service product, then we recommend that you skip the next couple of paragraphs and begin reading about RSS (Real Simple Syndication) and blogs as distribution options.

The Communications Newsletter

Most library newsletters aim to be public relations tools. Newsletters are used to maintain visibility in the marketplace and draw attention to products and services the library offers. A well crafted newsletter allows you to maintain a rewarding relationship with current and potential clients, the media and other important contacts in your target user community. And because the effort of creating a newsletter itself speaks volumes about your commitment to your library and its services, it continually reminds readers and positions you and your staff as experts and valuable resources.

As public relations tools, newsletters work in tandem with the rest of your communications activities. It's important to identify the role it will play in your plans, who you are targeting, and the communications objectives you want to attain. Newsletters can also play a role in your advertising and promotion plans. Imagine using your newsletter to run ads promoting products or other services your library offers or as a vehicle for running promotions and contests that drive traffic to your virtual or physical library.

Developing Newsletter Content

We're going to assume that the purpose of your newsletter is to be a communications tool. Now it's time to outline the content. From original 1,000 word articles to lists of Internet links, the main ingredient for a successful and popular newsletter is its content. It's important that your newsletter offers what your target audience will want to receive, or even subscribe to, and that you choose items that won't be out of date in a month.

Developing the content of a newsletter may seem daunting at first, but never fear, you are not alone. There are four ways to get content for your newsletter:

1. You could write it yourself. This is great if you have the time or you're a prolific writer. If you fit into this category, then you should go to the next section. The rest of us will move on to the next option.

2. Pay someone else to write it. Ah. Now here's a nice approach if you have the funds to compensate someone to write articles for you. There are many free-lance writers who accept writing assignments for newsletters and this option can be an excellent approach for augmenting content you and your colleagues have prepared. You might prefer working with someone who is willing to be a "ghostwriter" so articles appear without an author byline. Writers can base their fees either on the number of words in an article or the amount of time

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they spend writing. You'll want to be sure to be sure to copyright ownership with any writer you engage.

3. Subscribe to a newsletter filler service. There are a multitude of article syndication services to choose from as well as filler subscription services. A syndication service will allow you to select and pay for articles on an as needed basis, while a filler subscription service provides numerous fresh articles on a regular basis, copyright free. Both options are usually a less expensive alternative to hiring a writer. However, you should keep in mind that these articles are not exclusive nor are they tailored to the particular interests of your readership.

Since you're producing a library information services newsletter, you'll probably want at least one article devoted to an information service topic. A source for syndicated, well-written articles is Bates Information Services. MaryEllen Bates is a highly regarded information consultant who has written books and Online magazine columns. Her "Tip of the Month" articles can be purchased for your newsletter at: <http://www.batesinfo.com/tip.html>. If you are interested in learning about a filler subscription service, we recommend PAGES. You can read more about PAGES in this month's [Pearls of Wisdom](#).

4. Use free articles available on the Internet. Many professionals and vendors write articles and post them on their web sites for people to reprint free in their newsletters. For example, if you want to reprint articles from Marketing Treasures, you can request articles through our Marketing Companion service (Marcom@chrisolson.com). Vendors and others who offer free articles usually request that you include an attribute paragraph at the end of the article. This normally includes their name, company, Web site and permission to reprint. Providing free articles for newsletter editors is considered to be good will and in return, a point of visibility for the professional or vendor.

Content also includes graphics. You'll want to incorporate photos and clip art to add visual interest to the newsletter. Illustrations can help illustrate concepts you're showcasing and give the reader's eye a path to follow while scanning the content. To get you started, we invite you to peruse our free collection of library clip art at: <http://www.libraryclipart.com>

Format Options

To ensure your newsletter presents itself to readers as you intended, we recommend choosing a flexible newsletter layout template which allows you to designate space to specific columns and features. Giving your newsletter a consistent look and feel increases familiarity and that inspires return visits and builds readership. Templates can make newsletter production easier. By knowing where columns are located and their word counts, you can prepare articles to fit a designated space with little or no copy-fitting. And once the template has been designed, you don't have to tinker with the overall graphic look or layout.

One option you may want to consider is automating the whole process with a web-based newsletter production service. There are many services offering free newsletter templates, easy formatting and quick distribution service. Using a web-based production service also gives you a turnkey subscribe and un-subscribe feature, so you don't spend hours adding and deleting e-mail addresses or implementing a distribution database.

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The question of "what is the best format for an e-mail newsletter?" is still unresolved. Our personal experience with Marketing Treasures shows that more than 96% of our readers receive the newsletter in HTML format. The remainder receive it as a plain text file, and the majority of those subscribers have AOL addresses. We recommend displaying the newsletter in the e-mail message rather than providing only a link to a web page or PDF file. Because of the volume of information most people encounter, you'll want to give your newsletter the opportunity to "hook" the reader into browsing it immediately, otherwise it may

language in the dreaded "to be read" file. This advice applies to both paper and electronic newsletters. At the very least, include an annotated table of contents in your announcement message if you have to post the actual newsletter to a Web site.

Distribution Issues

Besides e-mail and snail mail distribution, newer delivery formats are finding their way into newsletter publishing. Among them are:

RSS (Real Simple Syndication): This is a format for syndicating news. A RSS feed is a great way for you to immediately inform subscribers of changes or new content on your site, in your newsletter or other communications. Keep in mind though, if you're interested in tracking the number of people receiving your newsletter RSS feeds, stats are impossible to compile on RSS feeds. Currently there is no reliable mechanism for counting, although that hurdle should be overcome in the next 12 months.

Blogs: With spam filters making it more difficult to send e-mail newsletters, many publishers are turning their attention to blogs. This is a great way to instantly push content to readers and gives you an adjunct to your e-mail marketing efforts. Blogs can extend the reach of your newsletter by paring down the size of each issue -- if that's needed. Otherwise you can use a blog to dispatch your articles and news on a daily/weekly basis, and then at the end of the month compile the best into a newsletter. This approach allows you to maintain visibility with clients who like daily updates along with folks who prefer less frequent communications.

Additional Resources

Library Listservs-n-More provides a great list of newsletter tutorials and articles offering advice on developing, formatting and distributing your newsletter

<http://librarysupportstaff.com/4createnewsltr.html>

Marketing Treasures publisher Chris Olson is available to lead her 4-hour newsletter workshop for novice and seasoned newsletter editors. The workshop is suitable for network and consortium meetings, informal professional gatherings, conferences, or continuing education credits. <http://www.chrisolson.com/consulting/cpresent.html>

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Treasure Tips

What Is A Call To Action

Attention. Interest. Desire. Action. AIDA is the classic advertising model for developing effective promotions. It's a reliable template in which promotion efforts aim to get people's Attention, stimulate their Interest, generate Desire and most importantly, communicate a call to Action.

Though it may be the last element in the AIDA model, a call to action is arguably the most important piece of the formula because it addresses the goals and objectives of your campaign -- compelling the consumer to buy or use what you are promoting.

Whether you are asking your customer to purchase a product or execute an activity, think of yourself as a sales person with a word processor when eliciting your call to action. You are out to close the deal (have them use a library product or service). It's not enough to get your customers' attention and stimulate their interest by selling the features of your library. It's up to you to provide them with a message and a device to help them take action -- to follow through. For example, if you want to increase attendance at a seminar sponsored by your corporate information service, your call to action might be "Register Now" and the action device would be the registration form or phone number to the registration desk. If you invite people to subscribe to your newsletter, your call to action most likely would be, "Sign Up Now" and the action device would be an e-mail link or subscription form. Without a call to action,

your prospective clients can be left with an ambivalent perception about your product or service. Or worse yet, frustrated that they have to take time to track down the offering you have sold them.

When you create promotion materials or advertise an event, make sure you include a Call to Action and an Action Device to help your clients respond to your offer.

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Promotion Gems

Working With An Embroidery Company

Embroidered logos and graphics on clothes and other cloth items are a nice alternative to silk screens. Embroidered images have a depth and finish that is frequently perceived as being upscale and desirable for promotions when a logo brand wants to go beyond the casual t-shirt look. If you're looking to have your library's logo, name, or other graphic embroidered onto fabric, here are some pointers.

1. The level of detail for embroidery is determined by stitch count. Most embroidered images are less than 5,000 stitches. However, stitch counts can go over 15,000 stitches. Of course, the higher the stitch count, the more expensive the job.

2. The stitch count can be impacted by the fabric being embroidered. A tight, dense fabric can be embroidered at a higher stitch count than a coarser, looser woven fabric. Dense fabric allows for greater detailed stitching and is desirable when an image has curves. Most companies will suggest the best fabric for the embroidery job.

3. The colors in an image can be matched to thread colors. Logos usually have Pantone Matching System (PMS) colors, and many thread manufactures can match most PMS colors. There's a color conversion database you can try at:
<http://www.ud.net/thread/index.html>.

4. Most companies offer cloth items which are made for embroidery -- the item fits on the machine easily. However, if you want the image placed in an unusual position, we suggest working with a local company and have the fabric embroidered before the item is sewn.

5. We recommend that you first print the graphic to be embroidered and place it on the item to identify the best size and placement. Most companies provide advice on the sizing for shirt pockets, sleeves, or other locations. We like to double-check since working with the item sometimes reveals surprises such as the back of a shirt having a pleat where an image was to go.

6. Always inspect a sample of the embroidery before giving approval for work to proceed. To set up the embroidery job, your logo or image will be digitized and the stitching will be specified -- the kind of stitches, the stitch length, the direction of the stitch, thread color, image size, and stitch count. Be sure to request that the sample be produced on the same fabric and fabric color as the final job. Leave enough lead time in the schedule to make adjustments. Once your graphic has been digitized for embroidery, it can be used for other jobs. However, if you decide to make the graphic larger or smaller for another job, it will have to be digitized again.

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The next time you want to reproduce your library logo or graphic on fabric, consider embroidery as an alternative to silk screening.

Pearls of Wisdom

A License To Read

Specialty license plates say so much about the drivers of the cars they belong to. They give hints about their personalities and make statements about their beliefs or preferences. Now in Texas and New York license plates are giving drivers an opportunity to help eradicate illiteracy and show support for their library. Both states are raising money for their public libraries by offering state library license plates. Proceeds from the "Texas Reads" plates will fund grants for library reading programs while sales of New York's "Love Your Library" version will benefit the state's 23 public library systems.

To find out more about the "Texas Reads" license plate visit:

<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/agency/txreads.html> For information about New York's "Love Your Library" license plate, go to: <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/summer/index.html>

Luckily a driver's license isn't always needed to show support for the library. The JanWay Company sells cool bike license plates that can be imprinted with your library's reading program theme. The license plate includes two plastic straps for attaching the plate to a bike. License plates aren't just for public libraries. Colleagues in academic and special libraries can use the plates on "vehicles" in their own libraries and organizations -- book trucks, mail carts, in house delivery baskets. Generate good will by handing out bike plates to customers for their children's bikes. Look for bike license plates at:

http://www.janway.com/bike-auto_plates-frames.html

PAGES Filler Service

When you are up against your newsletter deadline and it appears your content needs something extra, you can turn to PAGES to help you out.

PAGES is a newsletter filler service where subscribers can find articles, art, cartoons and even games to round out their newsletter content. Don't worry about copyright -- subscribers can use all of the articles they want and reuse them in print, Web or e-mail. You can even put your own byline on them and never give PAGES credit.

Ranging from technology and business to sports and professional development, there are new articles spanning 12 categories every month. There are also 40 new pieces of art available monthly along with announcers, headers, banners, borders and more.

It's easy to implement this timesaving service. PAGES material is available in mini layouts that pop into your publication. Get a free trial of PAGES or subscribe at:

<http://www.pagesmag.com>

Library e-Postcards

In the January issue of Marketing Treasures we mentioned electronic postcards as a means of going beyond promotional bookmarks. We want to expand on that idea with this link to American Greetings. For National Library Week the company created several free electronic postcards for libraries to send out. Three of them are generic and can be used any time of year. Here's the url to the free postcards. And you might send a card to the Public Relations contact, Laurie Henrichsen (Laurie.Henrichsen@amgreetings.com) with a note of thanks.

<http://www.americangreetings.com/category.pd?path=59953&>

Ideas For Connecting With Clients

For a quick communications refresher we recommend the energetic insights of Jessica Albano in her *C&RL News* article entitled "The Must List: Lattes, Magnets, and Six Other Ways to Connect With your Users" (*C&RL News*, March 2005) Jessica shares her experiences of reaching out to library clients and freely comments on what she has observed and learned. Jessica is the communications studies librarian at the University of Washington Libraries, so her examples are based on student and faculty interactions. From



attending presentations and fundraisers to maintaining a personal pathfinder web site for students and faculty, we think librarians in all types of settings can glean an idea or two from Jessica. Her article can be found at: <http://digbig.com/4desw>. To view Jessica's web site visit: <http://www.lib.washington.edu/subject/librarians/jalbano.html>

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Golden Opportunities

May 19. Proving Your Worth: Professional Business, Marketing, and Political Tools. Medical Library Association Conference workshop #101. Learn to use business, marketing and political skills to convey the value of information services.

<http://www.mlanet.org/am/am2005/index.html>

May 19. Visible Librarian: Marketing and Advocacy. CLA Montreal Chapter and the Quebec Library Association Workshop presented by Judith Siess. Contact Janet Ilavsky:

abqla@abqla.qc.ca

May 25 and 27. Crafting the Library Marketing Message. Sponsored by SOLINET. A hands-on class demonstrating how to develop a simple marketing plan to tell your library's story effectively. Full day workshop at University Of South Alabama and Solinet office in Atlanta.

<http://digbig.com/4denq>

June 4. Branding 101: What it Takes to Build a Library Brand. Learn the basic strategies for creating and managing a library brand (half-day workshop)

June 5. Planning Library Promotion Campaigns. Step through the process of planning a campaign and apply your new knowledge on a promotion planning team. (half-day workshop)

June 6. Communicating with Clients: Innovations and Inspiration. (presentation)

All led by Chris Olson at the Special Libraries Association conference in Toronto.

<http://www.sla.org/content/Events/conference/ac2005/index.cfm> or visit :

<http://www.chrisolson.com/coa/coawhatsnew.html>

June 10. Marketing Your Virtual Library. Sponsored by SOLINET. Topics include raising patrons' awareness of resources, how to promote databases on your web site, and using your resources as a lever to raise the profile of the library within the local institution or community. A full day workshop in New Orleans. <http://digbig.com/4denr>

June 24. Creating a Library Sales Force: It's Easier Than You Think. Develop library staff into informed and persuasive advocates for their library system. Full day workshop in Chicago at the ALA Conference. <http://digbig.com/4dens>

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Summer is the perfect time to get marketing plans and activities lined up for the Fall.

Chris Olson & Associates helps information professionals with their marketing and communications including service make-overs and brand development, product portfolios and web site marketing strategies. Chris offers more than 20 years of experience for you to tap. She's is available to discuss your plans and requirements at 410-647-6708. Or send her a note at Chris@chrisolson.com

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Contact us for reprints/article use at marcom@ChrisOlson.com.

If you want to peruse the newsletter in your browser, you can read it here:

<http://www.chrisolson.com/marketingtreasures/mtcurrent.html>

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