



The electronic newsletter
with marketing ideas for
information professionals.

compliments of...
Chris Olson & Associates

A Note From Chris

After researching the options we have decided to move the Marketing Treasures distribution and subscriber database to the newsletter services of Intellicontact. It was the most reliable service during our tests and we encountered no snags loading our Macintosh production files. As a subscriber you will notice immediate improvements. Now you can forward Marketing Treasures to a friend by clicking a button icon, and you can update your subscription record or unsubscribe by using the links at the end of the newsletter. Beginning with this issue, the newsletter is sent with both HTML and text together, making it unnecessary to know if your email reader is set to HTML or plain text. Plus those of you with AOL, Yahoo! and MSN email addresses will see consistent newsletter delivery since Intellicontact makes sure that their mailings are "white-listed" with major email vendors.

Having said all this, if you experience difficulty receiving the newsletter, please let me know at MTproduction@chrisolson.com.

Enjoy this month's articles!

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

Chris Olson
Publisher

It's Annual Report Time

In corporations and organizations everywhere, the people in the communications department have their heads down, working feverishly on their organization's annual report. Some are being produced to meet financial and public ownership obligations, other reports are being produced to leverage the communications opportunity annual reports provide.

Over the years there have been countless articles and guides written about how libraries should prepare their own annual reports and what to include in them. One such article was published this past summer by Kristin Cheney. "*Is an Annual Report in Your Library's Future?*" Law Library Journal 97, no. 3 published by American Association of Law Libraries. <http://tinyurl.com/7sbr2> Kristin provides pointers for producing a library annual report and the results of a library annual reports survey.

Yawn

I've seen all types of library annual reports in every conceivable format. From bookmarks to paper bags, librarians have used their imagination to present ... statistics. Here is the perfect venue to broadcast the benefits of the library and what gets featured in the annual report instead? Cold, unadorned numbers.

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Please forward this newsletter to anyone you know who is looking for ideas and resources for marketing their library. (See "Forward to a Friend" at end of newsletter.)

Talk about a missed communications opportunity! Numbers don't tell stories about the value the library adds to the bottom line or to the community, or to society, for that matter. Numbers need to be complemented with stories. Make the numbers mean something to the reader of the annual report. Breathe life into the numbers.

Sure. There's always a section in an annual report where the numbers are reported. But a larger section of the report presents the story of the organization: where has it been the past 12 months and where it intends to go. Many annual reports take the opportunity to communicate the organization's values and reinforce its brand message. Annual reports are written for investors and stakeholders to show that their investment and support in the organization is well-founded and flourishing. Everyone likes to think that they are part of a winning team. The annual report helps to solidify that perception.

Between the lines

Which brings me to another characteristic I've seen in some library annual reports: not so hidden messages. I can't count the number of library annual reports I've read where the person writing the report conveyed a bitterness which was impossible to ignore. Reduced staffing levels, budget cuts, nixed plans are woven into the short and curt narrative by the writer to make a point. While it may be tempting, the annual report is not the place to vent anger or disappointment. If it needs to be said, put it somewhere else.

Examples

As a communications tool, the annual report helps to shape perceptions as well as report the past and predict the future. Here are a few report examples you may be interested in perusing.

1. Washoe Library System 2004 annual report <http://www.washoe.lib.nv.us/>

This report does a good job of positioning the library as a forward thinking community resource. I wish they would have continued telling the story by interpreting some of the statistics at the back of the report. For instance, besides noting the Traveling Tales Story van reached 7,000 children, tell how the story service impacted a child or group of children. The graphics in this report are perfect for sound-bite stories.

2. Amgen 2004. <http://wwwext.amgen.com/investors/AnnualReport2004/about.html>

Inspired Science is the report theme. For 2003 the theme was What We Do. This is a great approach to an annual report. It helps to give the communication a message focus which falls in line with the brand.

3. The British Library 2005 <http://www.bl.uk/about/annual/2004to2005/introduction.html>

They've got a great story and vision... and lots and lots of words. Rather overwhelming.

4. Milton Public Library 2004 report <http://www.mpl.on.ca/report.html>

Starting with the cover, this report communicates friendliness and warmth. Notice they include a section with brief customer comments, and another with interesting questions and answers. I like the financial report. Very straightforward: "Where the money comes from." and "Where the money goes."

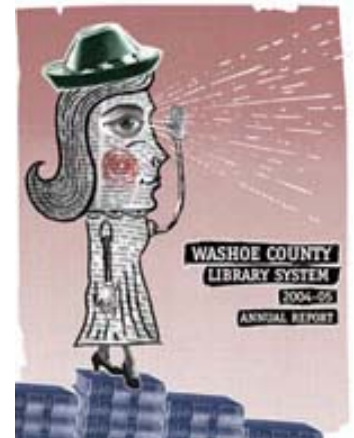
5. Starbucks 2005 <http://www.starbucks.com/aboutus/investor.asp>

Another example of an annual report with a communications theme. Notice how they weave the numbers with their brand. They tell a story. Stockholders receive the report complete with a complimentary Starbucks card.

6. Edmonton Public Library 2004 report. <http://www.epl.ca/EPLAnnualReports.cfm>

Easy to read, each page uses a headline to focus the content. Lots of photos and a good use of color carry the layout. The report is presented as a joint effort from the Director of Libraries and Chair of the Board.

The annual report should be included in your communications mix. It's a valuable tool for broadcasting



messages and reaching library stakeholders. I once read a librarian lamentations over how her library's annual report wasn't read by anyone, even after she promoted it. If you've had a similar experience and feel that the effort that goes into an annual report isn't worth it, then reconsider and evaluate what went into your report, how it was produced and distributed. You shouldn't be promoting the report like a product. It's a communications piece and should be distributed like other communications materials.

To jumpstart your annual report project, here's a excellent overview of what to consider when planning your report. "*Annual Reports: Connecting the Parts with the Whole*" By Marie Wallace (Posted January 1, 1998; Archived February 1, 1998) <http://www.llrx.com/columns/guide12.htm>

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Treasure Tips

What Is Concept Testing?

There you are, sitting in your office or meeting with your marketing team when the light bulb clicks on. You've got a brilliant idea for a product or service. It's the next best thing to sliced bread, or so you think. You talk to colleagues and they agree. But before you proceed to invest time and resources into your idea, even before you develop a prototype, you should run a quick concept test to determine if your idea has merit with your most important audience—the potential target market.

A concept test gathers the reactions of targeted customers, the people who you believe would use or purchase the product. The goal of the test is to determine if a viable market exists for the product or service idea. By conducting a concept test an early indication of the viability for a new product or service is achieved without spending resources on developing a prototype.

In order for a concept test to collect reliable reactions, the concept statement must be defined enough that it successfully communicates the idea. Most times the test centers around a written, verbal description with questions which provide insights into concept flaws, level of interest, likelihood of purchase/use, how the idea could be improved or developed further, and additional potential target markets.

It's unrealistic to expect a concept test to prove the idea is absolutely sound. Instead, concept testing can help you avoid prematurely killing off promising ideas while avoiding nurturing ideas with little or no potential. Concept testing should be a regular activity in your library's product and service development plans, and a precursor to beta testing of prototypes.

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Promotion Gems

Promoting Your School Library

Laurel Tarulli shares this advice for colleagues working in school libraries.

I had the good fortune to speak with a small town school librarian recently while writing a paper on school libraries and budget cuts. I asked her how school libraries in small towns were surviving the budget cuts and constant downsizing and merging of schools. From our discussion and further research, I found a trend among all school libraries that were surviving the budget cuts - successful promotion.

The Art Works

Turning a school into more than just a library really catches the attention of the school faculty and community. A small town school library in western New York uses its extra wall space as an art gallery, displaying students' art work. With a bit of an imagination, this idea can be expanded. Why not ask local artists to hold a show in the local school library? An event like this can bring the community into the library and allow you, the librarian, to show off what the library has, or reveal what it needs. There is no better way to have a community rally around its school library than for a parent to witness first hand the empty shelves, worn out books or old computers. Bringing exhibits into libraries is not new idea, however most school libraries have yet to do this. During parent teacher conferences, children will be proud to drag their parent through your doors and show off their framed drawing. This is a

chance for us to talk to parents, share ideas and let them know what projects the library is undertaking in collaboration with teachers or other schools.

A Town Hall

With the lack of public libraries in small towns, the school library is a great place to gather. Recommending that the library host the next Parent Teacher Association meeting or School Board meeting will go a long way toward building a school library's profile. If you can count on getting the people through the library door, it is up to you, the librarian, to show what the library has to offer. If it has been providing materials for a class project, strategically placing the end results in highly visible places will catch the attention of active parents and school budget voters. And, don't forget to use bright colors on your posters. The key is visibility!

Participation and Results - Score!

As librarians, we would love to be recognized for what we do and our role in the school library. Sometimes, it is not the library being cut, it is the librarian. Promoting ourselves is the last step to saving our school libraries. School newsletters are a great way to advertise ourselves and the library. They are a way to provide statistics about libraries with professional librarians as opposed to schools without them. Volunteering to write newsletter articles is not only a great way to promote the school library to the community, it is a great way to become actively involved in school committees. Participating in bake sales, attending sports events and yes, even helping out at the concession stand during the homecoming football game will all contribute to the visibility of the school library, and its librarian. A faceless, nameless librarian is disposable. An active, vibrant librarian is not.

So, when the next budget vote rolls around, you shouldn't be worried about budget cuts, you should be planning what you can do next year to increase your budget. In my old school, the incoming senior class always sold hotdogs and hamburgers to the voters as they went in. Perhaps next year you should stage a bake sale at the door to the voting booth. Cookies anyone?

Laurel has an MLS and is looking for a library marketing/PR position in Massachusetts (laureltarulli@yahoo.com.) "Taking the Leadership Initiative: How You Can Fight the Budget Cut Battle," a more extensive article written by Laurel about school libraries, can be perused at <http://www.schoollibraries.ca/articles/144.aspx> (School Libraries in Canada, Vol 24, N3, Jan 2005)

Pearls of Wisdom

Promotion Sources

As a marketing consultant I receive more than my fair share of catalogs. For those of you gearing up for a year of promotion activities, here are several catalogs you might want to browse if you don't already have them bookmarked or on your desk.

Oriental Trading Company

If you can't find an event idea here, you never will. This catalog is absolutely packed with theme ideas and inexpensive items. I used to walk through toy and gift stores for ideas. Now I thumb through the Oriental Trading Company catalog and browse their web site. And if you don't see something, ask their customer service department. They're very friendly and accommodating.

<http://www.orientaltrading.com>

Baudville

Granted, some of the themes are a little corny (or at least that's my opinion), but for the most part Baudville has got good ideas for recognition programs. This is a good source for items showing appreciation for a job well done, recognizing staff members, volunteers, library advocates, and fund raising campaigns. <http://www.baudville.com>

SmileMakers

This catalog is targeted towards teachers, but there's plenty between the pages for school and public librarians looking for promotion items and ideas. If you've been looking for inexpensive small, gold

advertisement

Free!

Articles to use in library newsletters. Available from the Emerald Library Link web site.

a service of
Emerald Group Publishing
www.emeraldinsight.com

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award trophies and 1st, 2nd, 3rd place ribbons, this is where you can get them.

<http://www.smilemakers.com>

Shindigz

If you're thinking about going the extra mile for your next open house, then this catalog is for you. Shindigz bills itself as a party superstore, and they've got items for all types of party themes. From wild west to Mardi Gras to starry nights, you'll find plenty of theme decorations. They also have a selection of photo murals which you can personalize. The murals of the deserted island and palm trees might be nice for libraries and rooms with no windows. <http://www.shindigz.com>

KIDS!@YourLibrary

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) has begun a multi-year, public awareness and advocacy campaign called KIDS! @ your library. Sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) the initiative will provide promotion tips, sample press materials, downloadable art, and other tools to help local libraries reach out to kids, their parents and caregivers. A Campaign Fact Sheet is available at <http://www.ala.org/alsc>

Executives Staying Informed

A report released in November 2005 provides insight into the information gathering habits of executives locating business information. 202 executives responded.

-- 91% of executives routinely use the Internet when searching for business-related information.

Respondents relied on the Internet more than any other source, including trade journals, books, newspapers, and webinars.

-- 47% indicate that unproductive searches and the need to sift through "too much information" are primary challenges associated with using the Internet.

-- A majority of executives spend four or more hours reading each week to stay informed and current. More time is spent reading at home or while traveling than in the office.

-- 67.5% of respondents said they don't read books or articles in entirety but read summaries, skim, or read specific sections.

While the results aren't startling it does point out that if you are providing or planning to provide information services to executives in an organization, packaging and product delivery should be given top priority in your marketing plan, right after content. The study was sponsored by Books24x7 and the 11 page report can be downloaded from <http://marketing.books24x7.com/exectrial.asp>

Help This Marketeer

Bonnie Saviers, Marketing Coordinator at the Washoe County Library System in Reno, Nevada writes with the following request:

"We'd like to develop an employee recognition program for our library system (14 branches.) It won't be anything too formal, just a way to recognize and commend library staff for doing a great job. All we're doing currently is sending out "kudos" via email.

I've learned that some programs that were tried before I started working here were not well received, so I'd really like to get ideas for things that have worked in other libraries."

Do you have any rewards or recognition program, ideas, or activities you'd like to share with Bonnie and other Marketing Treasures readers? Send your contribution to MarketeerSOS@chrisolson.com.

We'll publish the responses in the February issue of Marketing Treasures.

Golden Opportunities

January 31 Visual Branding and Design. The second workshop in a 3 part series called Strategic Library Branding. Presented by Chris Olson in Washington, DC. Sponsored by OCLC CAPCON.

<http://www.oclc.org/capcon/training/courses/descriptions/M214.htm>

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February 2 Advocacy Is Not Enough: Using Evidence-Based Outcome Measures to Demonstrate Library Impact. A half day workshop by Peggy D. Rudd in Austin, Texas.

<http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/workshops/aina/index.html>

February 3 Instant Messaging for Communication, Reference, and Outreach in Libraries. A 2 hour online presentation by Max Anderson. Sponsored by Solinet.

http://www.solinet.net/workshops/ws_details.cfm?doc_id=3806&WKSHPID=26IMLO

February 7 Planning Those #?!&*~@! Special Events. A morning workshop presented by Jill Stewart and Michelle Weber. Sponsored by North Suburban Library System.

<http://www.nsls.info/ce/ClassDetail.asp?course=1198>

February 7 Marketing your Virtual Library. A full day workshop by Laura Crook sponsored by the Tampa Bay Library Consortium and SOLINET. In Tampa, Florida.

http://www.solinet.net/workshops/ws_details.cfm?doc_id=3238&WKSHPID=26MYVL

February 22 Taglines and Brand Messages. The third workshop in a 3 part series called Strategic Library Branding. Presented by Chris Olson in Washington, DC. Sponsored by OCLC CAPCON.

<http://www.oclc.org/capcon/training/courses/descriptions/M215.htm>

March 6 - April 16 Testing Website Usability. An online course by Debra Shapiro through the Univ of Wisconsin, Madison School of Library and Information Studies.

<http://www.slis.wisc.edu/continued/usability.html>

March 7 Planning Library Promotion Campaigns. A half day workshop by Chris Olson. Sponsored by OCLC CAPCON in Washington, DC.

<http://www.oclc.org/capcon/training/courses/descriptions/M212.htm>

March 9 Survey Says! How to Conduct Surveys. A full day workshop by Lynda Idleman in Mississippi.

http://www.solinet.net/workshops/ws_details.cfm?doc_id=3322&WKSHPID=26SSHCS#

March 10 Writing Customer Focused E-Mail & Chat. A full day workshop by Leslie O'Flahavan. Sponsored by OCLC CAPCON in Washington, DC.

<http://www.oclc.org/capcon/training/courses/descriptions/I175.htm>

March 11 How to Conduct Focus Groups. A half day workshop by Elaine R. Martin through Simmons College in Boston. <http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/continuinged/workshops/simmons.shtml#focus>

March 22 How to Ask for Money and Votes for Your Library, Even if You Suffer from Paralyzing Stage Fright. A full day workshop by Pat Wagner at the Solinet office in Atlanta.

http://www.solinet.net/workshops/ws_details.cfm?mode=preview&doc_id=3823&WKSHPID=26HT

March 25 Service Strategy: How to Get the Right "Mix" of Services. A morning workshop by Rebecca Jones at the Computers in Libraries conference in Washington, DC.

<http://www.infotoday.com/cil2006/postconference.shtml>

March 29 Creating PR Materials with MS Publisher. A full day workshop by Julie Goyette in Birmingham, Alabama. <http://tinyurl.com/dqb9g>

April 13 Thinking Outside the Box: Principles and Practices of an Unconventional Library. A half day workshop by Karen Albury for the Greater Cincinnati Library Consortium. In Blue Ash, Ohio.

<http://www.gclc.org/ce/viewevent.php?id=718>

April 22 Out From Behind the Desk: Helping Librarians to Develop Their Public Voice. A full day workshop by Dale DeLetis through Simmons College in Boston.

<http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/continuinged/workshops/simmons.shtml#out>

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Are your marketing efforts stuck on the back burner? Time to call Chris Olson!

Whether you need help on a product make-over, logo design, brainstorming sessions, promotion campaign, web site design, communications plans or branding strategies, Chris and her associates are available to lend a helping hand. Call 410-647-6708 or send a note to Chris@chrisolson.com.

All inquiries and projects are held in complete confidence.

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

Questions? Comments? Ideas? Send your e-mail to MTComments@ChrisOlson.com or call (410) 647-6708. Thanks!

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

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Chris Olson & Associates : 857 Twin Harbor Drive : Arnold : Maryland 21012 USA

www.ChrisOlson.com

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 **FORWARD TO A FRIEND**