How New Librarians Used Branding and Outreach to Create Communities of Practice

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Take Away: Step off the cliff and get involved.

Inspired By Experiences With ACRL's Residency Interest Group:

Branding & Outreach:

Defining Your Brand
- Describe how you would like people to perceive your group in 3-5 words.
- Define what the ultimate long term goal of your group is.
- Keep the description and definition in mind as you create websites, programs, and activities.

Examples of Outreach Tools Using Branding from the Residency Interest Group

Facebook
http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/ACRL-Residency-Interest-Group
- Not everyone likes to use an RSS feed. Even if people don't make other posts to your group's page having website updates automatically posted on Facebook will make it easier for some people to keep up with what the group is doing and raise your visibility.

Flyer
http://acrl.ala.org/residency/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Printer_Friendly_Flyer.jpg
- Uses the same colors for text box labels as the website does for navigation boxes.
- Matches the font styles of the website.
- Uses Accessible Language, Low on Jargon

Podcasts

http://acrl.ala.org/residency/?category_name=newbie-dispatches-professional-development

- ○ All podcasts have the same introduction and ending music.
- ○ All podcasts are introduced and ended with similar patterns of speech.
- ○ Podcasts not following the theme of academic librarianship issues are called special reports allowing for interesting topics in librarianship to be addressed.
- ○ Podcast titles clearly express what the topic of the episode will be.
- ○ These posts are the most popular with the number of views ranging from 750 – 2,700+.

Website

http://acrl.ala.org/residency

- ○ Connected to ACRL through the header, links to ACRL on the side bar of every page, the use of ACRL's logo in connection with the interest group name, and through the URL which shows that the interest group is affiliated with ACRL and ALA.
- ○ Consistent theme across all pages (font, color scheme, writing style) with flexible forms of content delivery.
- ○ Creation of a QR code for easy mobile bookmarking.
- ○ Blog Posts are divided into 5 categories: news, guest writers, professional development, residents, and scholarship. These categories were planned before the current page layout was applied.
- ○ Initial number of views per blog post ranges from 20-50. Current number of views per post range from 150-2,000+.

Sources of Outside Inspiration

- ○ Attend non-traditional unconferences and podcamps to learn what other people are doing to promote their businesses and non-profits. Learn from everyone, what they are a doing right, and what they are doing wrong.
- ○ Check out books and posts by public relations, communications, outreach, and public information officers. These professionals work at promoting their clients and communicating effectively and have a multitude of strategies on how to do so.

Tie your efforts together using consistent design elements.

Ex. Color schemes, font, writing style, image, image types, or audio cues.

- ○ Base your physical design elements off of the vision for the future of the group. Ask yourself if your website reflects what your group stands for, if not it is probably time for a redesign.
- ○ People will pick up on your thematic cues subconsciously giving your group higher visibility.
- ○ All people write differently. It's good to choose a main tone of voice for the writing on a website: conversational, informative, or scholarly. The majority of your content should follow the chosen tone of voice, but occasional posts in another tone for a specific purpose should also be encouraged.

- Images: Images can tie a site together or make it look like no one knows what they are doing. Whether you decide on hand-drawn, candid shots, or carefully chosen stills and emblems keep your choice consistent. Again, it's okay to use a different type of picture when appropriate, but consistent quality is what keeps people coming back.

Building Communities & Outreach:

Always thank people for their efforts.
- Showing that you genuinely appreciate what people do is not only common courtesy, but it also makes people feel good and more likely to contribute in the future.

Avoid having too many presidents!
- Everyone will not always agree on how to do things; this is okay and can lead to even better collaborative ideas. In the end one person needs to be able to make a decision so that things can move forward whether a consensus can be reached or not.

Be persistent, it takes time for groups to gel and outreach efforts to take off.
- 1-2+ years is normal.
- Keep in mind that things often gel just after you feel like you should give up. Stick with it!
- Take a clue from small business and give your group up to 3 years to mature.

Be Present
- Show up! Attend your group's activities. Get to know who you are collaborating with.
- Attend as many receptions and functions as possible at regional and national conventions. If you're not comfortable talking about what you're doing talk up the great work your group is doing instead. Ask more experienced librarians for advice or suggestions.

Business Cards
- Have a named position? Put it on your business cards along with your group's name and website. This makes it easy to refer or recruit people to your group because you always have the information with you. Bonus points if you fit in a QR code for your group's website.

Don't try and do it all on your own, the more the merrier.
- When people contribute to something they develop a connection to it.
- The more people who contribute to a group the more projects, activities, and posts you can have without overloading anyone.
- Being inclusive encourages everyone to participate, not just a small click of people who do everything all the time.
- By having more people involved when life happens and people have vacations, or unexpected illnesses, other people are involved and know what is going on to minimize or completely negate the impact of one person being unavailable.

Extra-curricular Activities
- ○ Working together on something you care about if great but getting to know the people you are working with is equally important.
- ○ Coffee, Dinner, or Drinks are always popular.
- ○ Meeting outside of work and service activities helps bind a group together.
- ○ Even if attendance is low that doesn't mean they aren't successful events, every strong connection made reinforces the group and expands your own community of practice.

Interview people outside your group.
- ○ People like to be interviewed and help other people. By interviewing people outside your group you expand not only your group's community of practice but your own. Keep in mind that, unlike e-mail interviews, podcast interviews will and should go overtime as people expand on issues and talk about other topics of interest. For a recorded interview it's best to allow up to an hour of time for 20 minutes worth of material to podcast.
- ○ For a podcast ask no more than 5 questions or you will have to cut lot of material to keep your recording under 20 minutes.

Personal Connections (Making People Care)
- ○ Speak or e-mail with your collaborators several times a semester, meet with them in person when possible.
- ○ Invite others to contribute content to the group when relevant.
- ○ The best way to promote your group is to talk about the work group is doing.
- ○ Talking can also include written communication with friends and colleagues with similar interests containing links to relevant blog posts or announcements.

Volunteer
- ○ For open positions in groups that you care about.
- ○ To work information booths (you will get to know those you work with).
- ○ Short on time? Volunteer for short term projects, one time content creation, convention support positions (as little as 2-3 hours of effort would be needed), or to organize a group happy hour or dinner meet-up at a convention.

Recommended Readings

Why We Should Look Beyond Librarianship:

A Stealth Librarianship Manifesto
John Dupuis, Head of the Steacie Science & Engineering Library
York University, Toronto, ON, Canada.
URL: http://bit.ly/hKzUl7

Discovering the scientific conversation
Bonnie Swoger, Science and Technology Librarian
SUNY Geneseo
URL: http://bit.ly/hECIvk

Things I Did and Did Not Learn In Library School
Wayne Bivens-Tatum, Philosophy & Religion Librarian
Princeton University
URL: http://bit.ly/i9wMwx

Why Libraries and Archives Need Social Entrepreneurs
Rose l Chou, MLIS Student, San Jose State University
URL: http://wp.me/p1hO3h-Q

Communities of Practice

Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge - Seven Principles for Cultivating Communities of Practice
Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William M. Snyder
Harvard Business School Archive, 2002
URL: http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/2855.html

Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System
Etienne Wenger
Originally Published in the "Systems Thinker," June 1998
URL: http://www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/lss.shtml

CPSquare Resources
CPSquare: The Community of Practice on Communities of Practice
URL: http://cpsquare.org/resources/

Branding & Outreach Tips:

8 Fantastic Tutorials On How To Build Your Own Custom WordPress Theme
Yogesh Mankani
SaveDelete.com
URL: http://t.co/UH3q1Yc

21 Ways Non-Profits Can Leverage Social Media
Rich Brooks
Social Media Examiner
URL: http://bit.ly/bwYSkV

Brand Builder: Basics are the Underpinning for Social Media Success
Harvard Business Review
URL: http://hbr.org/2010/12/the-one-thing-you-must-get-right-when-building-a-brand
Note: The whole article isn't free, but enough is available to get something out of it.
There's always Interlibrary Loan if necessary.

Great Ogilvy Sketch of @FeliciaDay's Keynote
Posted by MarkGrant
URL: http://twitpic.com/49ik1e/full

Identifying Influential Spreaders in Complex Networks
Maksim Kitsak, Lazaros K. Gallos, Shlomo Havlin, Fredrik Liljeros, Lev Muchnik, H.
Eugene Stanley, Hernan A. Makse
arXiv:1001.5285v2 [physics.soc-ph]
URL: http://arxiv.org/abs/1001.5285

If You Don't Have a Blog, You Don't Have a Resume
John Dupuis, Head of the Steacie Science & Engineering Library
York University, Toronto, ON, Canada.
URL: http://bit.ly/gFYLqb

Landing Page Optimization Tips: Analysis of 50+ Sites to Find Out What Increases Sales and Conversions
Landing Page Optimizer
URL: http://bit.ly/cleKjw

On Self-Promotion (You could easily substitute librarian for woman or scientist.)
Laura E. Mariani, Neuroscience PhD Candidate
Emory University
URL: http://lauraemariani.blogspot.com/2011/01/on-self-promotion.html

Rob Forbes on Ways of Seeing
Rob Forbes
TED2006
URL: http://www.ted.com/talks/rob_forbes_on_ways_of_seeing.html
Note: See how a professional views design statements. Remember,
        design principles can be applied to any project.

Screenwriting for Librarians: Part 1 – What makes a good promo video?
Leo S. Lo, Research & Development Librarian/Assistant Professor
Kansas State University
URL: http://bit.ly/fhRulp

The Best Free Social Media Tracking Tools You Should Know About
Lauren
TNW Social Media
URL: http://thenextweb.com/socialmedia/2011/02/18/social-media-tools/

Top Ten Content Management Systems
Ryan Yaple
Tech King
URL: http://www.testking.com/techking/roundups/top-ten-contet-management-systems/

Two Ways To Use Crowdsourcing for Face-to-Face Conferences
Crowdsourcing.org
URL: http://bit.ly/e3Uu1X

What Can Public Engagement Learn From Community Organizing
Sciencewise
URL: http://bit.ly/a0OMd9
Note: Check out the Tools link on the left hand side navigation.

Write Once, Publish Many - Connecting With Students
Dr. Nick Morris, Senior Lecturer
Newcastle University, UK
URL: http://bit.ly/hNFB6v

What the Top 10 Blogs in Content Marketing Are Doing That You Probably Aren't
Andrew Hanelly
Engage the blog
URL: http://ow.ly/4eLdb