

# Marketing to Your Community: Becoming a Destination

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FDLP Connection - Community Insights

Written by Suzanne Sears, Assistant Dean for Public Services, University of North Texas Libraries

Written on Tuesday, 06 December 2011

I was pleased to have the opportunity to present "*Marketing to Your Community: Becoming a Destination*" at the Depository Library Council Meeting & Federal Depository Library Conference (Meeting & Conference) this past October. I am very passionate about Government documents and enjoy sharing with others ways to increase usage and relevancy of their depository collections. I refer to my marketing strategy as the **Four P's**: using **P**assionate **P**ro-active **P**romotions and **P**resentations to make your documents department a destination for answers.

**Passion** is an essential part of my marketing strategy. Enthusiasm is contagious. If you are excited about what you do then others will want in on what you have. Depository Coordinators face a unique challenge in that most people are unaware of the potential uses of Government documents collections. Difficulty of access is often another reason behind the reluctance to consult Government information.

The stereotype attached to Government documents collections is that they are dull, old, and boring. We have to create excitement over the hidden gems in the collection. Students are constantly looking for primary resources for term papers; make sure that they know the Government documents collection is full of them. Genealogists usually know about *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, but do they know about the Navy volumes or the numerous military registers? Homeschoolers love to find new resources, like the teacher kits that are sent out by many Federal agencies, not just the Department of Education. Some of my favorites are: *Civics and Citizenship Toolkit* (HS 8.2:C 49/2/2009/Toolkit), "*With Liberty and Justice for All*" *Making Civil Rights Real in America* (I 29.2:L 62/3), *From Farming Village to Log Hut City* (I 29.2:F 22/2/Pack), and *Cells, Genes, and Protein Machines* (HE 20.3152:C 33/5/Kit).

Our nation is built on the right to access Government information and to hold our Government accountable for its actions. One of James Madison's famous quotes is "knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives." As a depository coordinator, you have the opportunity to play a role in increasing the knowledge base of constituents and thus contributing to civic engagement. How cool is that?

Being **pro-active** is another essential component to becoming a destination for the community. Networking with area librarians and becoming active in local organizations are two great ways to distribute your name and area of expertise out to the community. Be sure to collect e-mail contact information from anyone showing an interest in keeping abreast of activities within the Government. Sending out e-mails with links to Government information related to current events is a great way to become relevant in the minds of others. You do have to be careful not to fall into the "too much information trap," or you will be seen as a nuisance and not an information provider.

**Promoting** the collection is essential to making it an invaluable resource. Quality internal and external customer service is one of the best ways to promote a collection. In addition, you need to be sure that your stacks are well maintained, keeping



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the collection clean and relevant. Word of mouth is the most cost efficient way to promote a collection. Make sure your customers have a wonderful experience that they will want to share with others. Creating displays throughout the library and the community, providing library tours, and sending relevant articles to the local newspaper are all ways to promote the collection. Take advantage of national holidays and other special days that are related to Government information, such as Constitution Day, Election Day, Veterans Day, and Presidents Day. At the University of North Texas, we partner with the local public library and the local Barnes & Noble book store to set up tables with free giveaways on some of these special days. Teacher Appreciation Weekend at Barnes & Noble is also a good time to set up a table with relevant Government documents resources for teachers and information on Web sites like [Ben's Guide to U.S. Government](#).

**Presentations** are the final "p" to becoming a destination. Providing training to library staff and the community is essential in creating excitement over the documents collection. If you are not a great presenter, then rely on some of the local Federal agencies to come and present for you. Agencies like the Internal Revenue Service, Small Business Administration, and Census Bureau often have educational components with staff that will travel short distances to present on specific topics. You can also work with local groups such as genealogical societies or inventor organizations to distribute information at their meetings relevant to their members. Custom-made bookmarks with bibliographies of appropriate Web sites and document titles are always a hit with these types of audiences.

Librarianship has changed a lot over the last 50 years. You can no longer sit behind a desk and expect patrons to find you. You need to be a visible part of their daily life to become relevant to them. Marketing is all about being in the right place at the right time. It is important to remember as you embark on your quest to become a community destination that it is okay to fail. Some promotional ideas or presentations will not have the appeal you expect. It is okay. You have to relax, take control of what you can, and don't sweat the rest. You can control your level of knowledge, your level of enthusiasm, and your positive focus. If one idea fails, then try a different strategy the next time. What works in one community may not work at all in another. Do not be afraid to try new things, and I assure you, some of them will be successful.

One last thing to remember is that you do not have to reinvent the wheel. Depository coordinators across the country are promoting their collections and giving presentations. Many ideas are available through handout exchanges and e-mail lists. Reach out to the community of depository librarians for ideas if you are stumped and don't know where to begin. Many of the outreach efforts that we have done at the University of North Texas are in my presentation slides. They are posted on the FDLP Desktop with the other conference [proceedings](#). Be sure to check out the [Government documents Web page](#) for the UNT Libraries. If you have any questions about our marketing campaigns, please feel free to [e-mail me](#) or call me at (940) 565-2868, and I will be happy to give you all the details.

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