

Public Mandates and Priorities

PMAP - 11: Promoting Library Services in the Digital Media Age

Libraries, as public entities, have a responsibility to create community conversations and awareness about their services and programs -- which are free and open to all people in the service area. These services and programs are paid by tax dollars and should be maximized to promote education, social development and the public good. How best to effectively market the library, therefore, should be a priority.

Author and marketing expert Scott Goodson, in Forbes magazine (2012), writes that dramatic advances in personal technology is driving significant changes in today's marketing environment: "...We are entering a completely new era of communication... Brands are interacting with publics in a completely new way...We are witnessing the whole new level of experiential and interactive approach to communication."

A 2012 study from IDG Research Services found that 95 percent of consumers use at least one type of social media. A 2010 U.S. Census Bureau study found that 80 percent of people in the United States regularly use the Internet. According to USA Research, most people in Johnson County value their time spent on the Internet. In fact, nearly a quarter of local residents rate their time on the Internet a 6 or higher on a 9-point scale of high interest.

Likewise, research is showing that comprehensive and well-planned digital marketing programs can be cost effective at reaching specific audiences.

According to a study conducted by Focus.com, digital and social media programs have an 85.4 percent customer engagement rate and a 65 percent direct customer communication rate for every \$1 spent, which is statistically significant in result-oriented marketing efforts. (Print ads generally have an audience impact of 50 percent.) These types of potential results have the potential to benefit libraries trying to promote themselves within limited marketing budgets.

Implications for JCPL

- Web and social media sites and e-marketing programs can effectively promote library services and programs to demographic and/or interest-specific audiences.
- Likewise, interactive media programs allow people to more easily register and participate.

- Digital advertising is a variable cost form of advertising, meaning that an ad campaign is more easily scalable to a specific fixed budget amount compared to the flat fees associated with running an ad in print.
- JCPL could explore potential for more cost-effective promotions by reallocating funds spent on traditional print promotions to digital marketing.
- JCPL could review staffing responsibilities for digital marketing programs, and determine how best to plan and execute them through reallocation of resources and reorganization of staff.
- Successful digital marketing could increase traffic in our branches resulting in the need for more resources.