Montgomery County Public Libraries

Where the County Reads, Where the County Meets, Where the County Learns

FY13 – FY16

Marketing Plan

Executive Summary

It is essential that Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) market its services and resources to effectively bring attention to our libraries, the services we offer and demonstrate our value to the community, our stakeholders, our financial supporters and the public. Marketing is a proactive function.

The MCPL Marketing Plan for FY13 – FY16, known as "The Plan" is intended to strengthen the Libraries' image, increase library use by our residents, drive traffic to our website and place us above our competitors to demonstrate return on investment to our financial supporters. The Plan will help MCPL develop and execute strategies that communicate our mission and demonstrate the vital role we play within the community.

MCPL's FY13 – FY16 Strategic Goal for Marketing is to *"Empower our Communities by Creating Awareness of Libraries' Resources."* The Plan's strategic objectives are:

- Help each community reach its cultural awareness through collections, displays and programming.
- Continue to strengthen the Libraries' outreach to the Senior and people with disabilities communities.
- Communicate the roles of Libraries to the communities.
- Implement the four objectives of the Libraries' Marketing Plan.
- Implement the Libraries' Outreach Program to the communities.

Results from the 2008 and 2011 Customer Satisfaction Surveys indicate that a percentage of our current library users are unaware of the programs, services and resources the Libraries offers. In addition, staff feedback gathered from the 2011 Staff Development and Training Day indicates marketing and publicity are important concerns for the staff of Libraries.

The strategic marketing activities identified as a priority include:

1. Improve the Libraries' website so that the public can see what Libraries offer.
2. Use the website to highlight services and programs.
3. Promote our brand with sponsored advertising.
4. Conduct outreach by demographics to specific populations such as teens, Seniors and New Americans.
5. Collaborate with community organizations.
6. Conduct shared marketing with other County departments.
7. Have staff be proactive in marketing Libraries' programs and services.
8. Increase awareness of services via local businesses, advertising and displays.
9. Collaborate with schools to promote our services and programs.

These nine strategic activities will guide the Plan to meet our customers needs and demonstrate MCPL's commitment to the communities it serves. Targeted marketing of specific services and resources through awareness campaigns and participation in community outreach events will help raise the public's knowledge of Libraries' services, programs and materials available to them.

Introduction

The FY13 – FY16 Marketing Plan presents a fresh opportunity to increase the Libraries' visibility and create interest in using the libraries. The Plan provides a consistent means of ongoing communication between Libraries, the staff, and the public. To accomplish this, the nine strategic activities are grouped into four categories:

Refresh MCPL's website
- Improve the Libraries' website so that the public can see what Libraries offers.
- Use the website to highlight services and programs.

Revitalize MCPL's Outreach Program
- Promote our brand with sponsored advertising.
- Increase awareness of services via local businesses, advertising and displays.
- Conduct outreach by demographics to specific populations such as teens, Seniors and New Americans.

Renew MCPL's Collaboration opportunities
- Collaborate with community organizations.
- Conduct shared marketing with other County departments.
- Collaborate with schools to promote our services and programs.

Rededicate MCPL's marketing of Libraries' programs and services.
- Implement staff's use of social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter, in compliance with the County's and department's Social Media standards.
- Use the revised Graphic Standards for flyers and branch advertising.
- Use Plain Language in all areas of MCPL's marketing.

1. Refresh MCPL's Website

As part of Montgomery County Government, MCPL complies with the County's Web Refresh Project to enhance resident's access to County services and improve ADA compliance. MCPL is in the process of reviewing all of the Libraries' pages to make the programs and services offered visible to the customer. In the short term, MCPL's website will display a combination of the current and proposed website pages. By the end of FY13, MCPL's website will be on the County's new servers and the web refresh will be complete.

As MCPL moves into the FY13 – FY16 Strategic Plan, the Plan includes regular website review and maintenance to retain only the most current and accurate information about Libraries' programs and services. MCPL will continue to utilize LibGuides as a method of information sharing with the customer. MCPL will continue to offer Reader's Café, Kidsite and Teensite. As the demographics of the branch communities are defined, MCPL's website will include new and/or updated information to meet the needs and interests of the County.

Programming is a core service of MCPL. MCPL will maintain an appropriate calendar of events so that customers can locate programs of interest as well as programs in convenient locations.

MCPL will implement and use the concepts of Plain Language in order to effectively communicate services and programs to its customers.

2. Revitalize MCPL's Outreach Program

As MCPL implements the FY13 – FY16 Strategic Plan, one major theme is to continue to reach beyond the libraries' walls in order to promote the services and programs of Libraries to current and new communities. To do that successfully, MCPL must identify its target audiences.

One source of information is the current 2012 Census Data. MCPL will use the current census data to identify the target audience(s) using the following characteristics: age, income, life stage, buying habits, location within a branch community, etc. For example, when crafting the key message for a particular campaign, MCPL will determine the benefits to the target audience. The campaign's emphasis will focus on what the target audience will gain by using the service or program offered by MCPL.
How MCPL identifies its target audience and what services to market to that audience is dependent upon how many people are in that demographic identifier and currently use the services and resources. An effective marketing campaign or activity will use the following evaluation criteria:

- Clear and measurable goals
- Define and track key performance indicators
- Evaluate pre- and post-campaign results
- Calculate the marketing ROI (Return on Investment)

A marketing campaign is an investment of time, human resources and money. Measuring the return on investment is important in order to decide whether to retain, stop, or update the specific marketing effort.

Staffing levels specific to implementing the Outreach Program are necessary to reach beyond the libraries' walls and let new communities, such as teens, Seniors, and New Americans know about the services and programs available to them.

3. Renew MCPL's Collaboration Opportunities

MCPL will renew previously established partnerships in order to conduct shared marketing efforts with other County departments that share similar target audiences. One such collaborative effort is MCPL's participation in the Homeless Resource Day sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services.

MCPL will revisit and renew its collaborative efforts with the City of Rockville, as an example, to coordinate activities that promote the Town Center merchants and Libraries' services and programs.

MCPL will collaborate with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to promote our services and programs that communicate our role in early literacy and school curriculum. For example, MCPL will also work with MCPS to determine if there are any databases that duplicate services.

4. Rededicate MCPL's Marketing of Programs and Services

Libraries' services such as events, programming, collections, and access to information are the tangible goods that have value and benefit to our customers. MCPL's entire staff shares in the marketing of Libraries' services to our customers in a variety of ways. MCPL's Plan takes into account all of the various methods of communicating Libraries' services and benefits to the customer, including the use of the revised Graphic Standards and Plain Language for flyers; and the use of Plain Language on the Libraries' website and use of social media.

Libraries' operations and the delivery of information and services will change as technology changes; and so will our marketing strategies. Information access has shifted. More people are using mobile technology to receive and send information. It is important that the Plan consider new methods of marketing to reach all users such as blogs, Wiki's, gaming, RSS feeds, photo sharing, and social book-marking. It is also important that staff utilize Twitter and Facebook in program marketing campaigns.

For each marketing campaign or event, the Marketing Committee will determine the means of promotion best suited to the service, product or concept being promoted or is most suitable for the target audience. The Committee will use information from the Customer Satisfaction surveys to determine what drives our users and what the customer consider important. The marketing promotions will tie into the needs, preferences, and decision-making practices of our users as well Libraries' initiatives and input/feedback from staff. The Plan will also:

- Provide a mechanism for staff to give input and feedback.
- Use a variety of media and technology to reach traditional users and non-traditional users such as Generations X and Y.
- Demonstrate to the public the relevance of libraries in their everyday lives, as a result, increase use.
- Ensure that MCPL has a positive presence in the professional and news media community.
- Promote the use of established Graphic Standards throughout the system so that all promotional materials have a professional, standardized look that is identified with MCPL.
- Provide the concepts, materials and strategies to help staff actively promote Libraries' services to the public.
- Ensure that all staff deliver the same message with the same level of importance.
- Ensure that staff are knowledgeable about Libraries' services and resources and communicate this knowledge to customers.

The purpose of the Graphic Standards is to standardize all documents created by MCPL, maintain a consistent high quality product, reinforce MCPL visibility and strengthen its identity and role in the community. The MCPL Graphic Standards apply to all documents created for public use by staff at MCPL branches and Central Administration. See Appendix B for the complete Graphic Standards Manual.

It is recommended that the Friends of the Library, Montgomery County, Inc., local Friends chapters and Library Advisory Committees follow the procedures outlined in the MCPL Graphic Standards Manual.

The Graphic Standards in the FY13-FY16 Marketing Plan replace the previous Graphic Standards Manual. These Graphic Standards will be evaluated on an annual basis to insure they continue to meet the strategic goals.

Plain Language removes barriers to understanding, improves customer compliance and reduces the need to explain. It is communication that is direct, organized in a logical way, concise and easily understood.

MCPL will implement its Strategic Marketing Plan using the principles of plain language communication. The effectiveness of MCPL marketing campaigns will be measured and evaluated on the use of Plain Language in its marketing strategies. See Appendix C for the Plain Language Manual.

MCPL's Marketing Committee will utilize the Analysis of Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (S.W.O.T.) process as a method to evaluate the Libraries' S.W.O.T. internal strengths and weaknesses as well as any external opportunities or threats that impact business operations. See Appendix D for a listing of MCPL's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

MCPL will use the following strategies and tactics to reach current and new customers:
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Bus Placards
- Newspaper Advertising (print and online)
- Social Media – Facebook, Twitter, Blogs
- Libraries' Website
- Articles in local/community newsletters (print and online)
- Articles in professional publications such as Library Hotline and Maryland CRAB
- Flyers and Publications
- Promotional Campaigns
- Community Partnerships
- Participation in Outreach Opportunities
- Quick Response (QR) Codes
- Signage

Implementing the Strategic Marketing Plan as MCPL begins to re-build its infrastructure will allow MCPL to reach new audiences, increase its brand with current and new customers and help MCPL develop and execute strategies that communicate our mission and demonstrate the vital role we play within the community.