

Promoting your library

In 1982 the American Library Association produced a book called 68 Great Ideas: The Library Awareness Book.

It consists of — you guessed it — 68 different ideas for making the community more aware of libraries. It's full of interesting ideas, like this Q & A suggestion for instance —

TARGET AUDIENCE: Local Newspaper Readers
IDEA: Question and Answer Column
FROM: Monroe County Library System, Monroe, Michigan

"Answers from Your Library" is a simple, entertaining idea for a local newspaper column that encourages readers to call the library whenever they have a question.

Q. & A.

Readers can submit questions on any topic, either through the paper or library branches. The library researches and answers them in the newspaper. The library's address, phone number, and hours are included in the column, which has covered everything from how to make salt dough ornaments for Christmas to the best ways to detect counterfeit bills.

The column is a regular weekly feature in the evening newspaper. Library Director Bernard A. Margolis says, "We have found that this simple idea has gone far in making the public aware of the library system as an information center."

or challenging people to stump the librarians, like this

TARGET AUDIENCE: General Public
IDEA: "Stump the Librarian" Road Show
FROM: Public Library of Columbus & Franklin County, Ohio

With an impending tax levy renewal, the Public Library of Columbus & Franklin County invested in an opinion research and learned that most adults visited the library because their children brought them. They were not aware of the many services and programs for adults.

The problem, then, was to find the most visible way to increase public awareness of library services for adults (voters) while spending the least staff time and money. The solution: find a proven plan and put it to work. The Baltimore County Library had used a "Stump the Librarian" program to increase teenagers' use of the library (see *School Library Journal*, March 1980). The Columbus & Franklin County Library put together a "road show" of skilled reference librarians,

armed with a good basic collection, to perform the library's most basic adult service—answering reference questions. The knowledgeable crew appeared with the library's familiar old bookmobile draped in bright "Stump the Librarian" banners.

During April (National Library Month) and May, five Stump the Librarian spots were held in high-density pedestrian-traffic areas—four major shopping malls and the lawn of the Ohio Statehouse in the very center of downtown. Spring shopping and spring fever contributed to the visibility of the show, and mall officials and state government staff helped arrange the appearances and publicize them.

Advance publicity included radio public service announcements, local articles in the county's weekly papers, articles in the major daily papers, and handbills. Follow-up articles and photos were released after the first few events.

Team leaders, recruited for each location, scouted their own team members. The teams were sent out with a good supply of brochures about the library and a basic reference collection, plus some additional materials keyed to special events in the malls, i.e., a dog



show at one mall prompted the team to answer questions from canine enthusiasts.

Mall and statehouse officials guessed that 80,000 people saw the Stump the Librarian bandwagon. Thankfully, they didn't all ask a question. Out of a total of 463 questions, all but 88 were answered on the spot. Answers to the rest were mailed. The staff accepted 72 applications for new library cards and passed out 5000 pamphlets about library services. The Extension Department reference statistics increased by 13 percent that year, and the Main Library's reference transactions were 17 percent higher than 1980. But, did the campaign reach the adult voting public? The library won the property tax levy renewal with an unprecedented 73 percent of the popular vote. Additional benefits came from the cooperative efforts of Main Library, Extension, Administration, and Bookmobile staffs all working together on a fun and rewarding project.

Getting the youngest and the oldest members of the organisation to get know each other as well as making them more aware of their library was another idea:

TARGET AUDIENCE: Children and Seniors
IDEA: Get Seniors Involved in Producing Flannel-Board Stories
FROM: Mideastern Ohio Library Organization

Youngsters enjoy flannel-board stories, but making all the story characters for the use of libraries in six counties could be a time-consuming job.

The children's consultant for the Mideastern Ohio Library Organization (MOLO) approached residents of a local senior center to make the felt characters. She demonstrated to them how the storytelling is done and supplied the center with felt and other materials. Stories and patterns came from *Story Telling with the Flannel Board*, Book One and Two, by Paul Anderson, and *Figures for the Flannelboard*, by the Prairie State Story League.

When completed, the felt figures for each story are placed in a separate plastic bag, which is the nucleus of a story kit. Each kit, assembled at the MOLO offices, consists of a two-pocket folder with the bag and a list of all the pieces enclosed and a copy of the story. For record-keeping, a form requests the number of times the story is used and the number of children who attend.

Each library in the MOLO cooperative has a list of the stories available. MOLO lists new stories in its newsletter and mails them out at librarians' requests.

As a follow-up, the senior citizens were invited to come to a story hour to watch one of their carefully made stories delighting a group of children. Newspaper publicity told the public not only what the library had to offer children but what the senior citizens had to offer, too.

There must be lots of excellent promotions taking place in libraries throughout Australia. Or perhaps you are planning something for Heritage Week that will bring more people to the library or make the community more aware of the many resources and services to be found at their local library.

The Publications Board of the LAA is interested in publishing a book similar to the American one and is asking you to participate.

Send details of your promotional activities to

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