

MVLS Acquisition Marketing Plan

Overview & Need: “Acquisition Marketing” is public relations jargon that means finding new customers. The overall purpose of this initiative is to inspire more people to use and value our public libraries. This initiative is an outgrowth of the 2016 MVLS Planning Process.

That planning process sought public input from member library representatives on new or expanded services that could be offered by the system. One service that the respondents - directors, trustees and staff - rated high was initiatives to improve the public perception of public libraries in the MVLS region.

MVLS plans to work toward meeting that need in two ways. The first - which will require much more time and resources from both MVLS and the members - is to concentrate on the individual local conditions in each member library. MVLS plans to do this by helping member libraries engage currently unserved members of their communities, provide new services, educate the public on the impact of library services and advocate for sustainable funding. This initiative is outlined in a separate proposal titled *Community Engagement, Library Impact and Sustainability Project*.

The second “improving public perception” initiative, and the one addressed by this Acquisition Marketing Plan, is mass communications to raise the awareness of library services and impacts in general.

Goal: Regional residents will accept and acknowledge that public library services are available, relevant, used and valued by the regional population. Both library users and non-users will appreciate the services that public libraries make available in their communities.

The Plan

This plan has two aspects. The first is to produce mass market library positive messages to reach a broad audience, concentrating on people who do not already use the library and don't consider libraries to be relevant in the 21st century. The second aspect will be the development, placement and promotion of library impact stories that are specific to individual libraries or groups of libraries.

Blanketing library-positive messages: This means putting the library message in locations and mediums where many people will experience that message unasked. The idea is to provide a public and active counter-argument to the common misconception that libraries are no longer needed. Here are three potential threads for this effort. Since these are three different markets, I believe we should do all three.

1. PSAs on 810 WGY. These spots are priced at \$35 for two 15 second spots. A typical campaign would run 5 spots/week for several months. The specific wording of the spots

will change over time, allowing for the communication of multiple messages. The approximate cost is \$420/month.

2. Underwriting on WAMC Public Radio. WAMC is a widely listened-to public radio network based in Albany. Underwriting spots cost just under \$30 each. We can do a campaign of 5 spots per week, scattered throughout the day, for \$500 per month. The specific message of the spots can be changed regularly, and can emphasize different aspects of library service - e-resources, early literacy, banned books, etc.
3. Google Ads. A Google ad campaign targets specific search terms used in a defined geographic region. So ads appear along with search results when defined search terms are typed in by users in a geographic region. Payment is based on searchers clicking on ads - no click, no pay. Typically advertisers set a budget per week, and Google places the ad until the set number of clicks is achieved. A typical budget is \$10/week.

Taken together, these three marketing initiatives should reach a broad audience with library-positive messages. Funding for these marketing efforts is already in the 2016 MVLS budget, and can be included in the 2017 budget.

Story Development & Placement. In addition to providing broad brush and wide release library positive messages, MVLS will work with D2 Media and our member libraries to produce library impact stories, and will widely disseminate those stories to media outlets. Libraries are generally very good at compiling statistics, and we have become more adept at sharing those statistics in ways that promote the concept of library impact. Libraries also generally do a good job of promoting upcoming programs and events. But we have not found an effective way of sharing and communicating positive library impact stories. This initiative to identify, develop and place library impact stories in the media is designed to help libraries better tell their impact stories in their communities.

Our goal will be to place one feature media article each month. Sometimes these will be general articles based around “calendar” concepts like National Library Week, but much of the time we will be seeking out specific stories on the library’s impact on individuals and groups through specific library services. Here’s a basic course of action:

1. Work with D2 Media to define the parameters of a placeable library impact story. What are the essential elements of a story that communicates library impact? What are the essential elements of a story that is placeable in newspapers and other media outlets?
2. Develop a mechanism for collecting and prioritizing stories. This will effectively function as another MVLS grant program, potentially with Foundation backing. Members will propose stories for consideration. A committee (Library Services?) will select the successful entries. In addition to getting their story publicized, the winning libraries will get a \$250 mini-grant to use on some form of public relations.
3. D2 Media writes and places the stories in area media outlets. MVLS keeps an ongoing record of all stories on the MVLS website.

