

Library Marketing and Communications Conference 2019

By: Jamie Matczak



On November 13-14, 2019, I attended the Library Marketing and Communications Conference in St. Louis, MO. This conference has only been around for a few years, and I had heard from Jill Fuller at the Bridges Library System that it was excellent. All of the sessions focus on library marketing and communications. I came away with some new tools that I would like to try, some goals, and some big-picture ideas.

In addition to myself, Jill Fuller from Bridges Library System attended the conference, as well as Rebecca Schon Kilde, from IFLS. The conference went two full days, and there were four tracks that focused on the following: Communications/PR, Graphic Design/Tech Tools, Social Media and Marketing Strategies. Because many of the sessions looked beneficial, Jill, Rebecca and I managed to divide and conquer what we attended. The sessions were fantastic! They also had a swag table, where attendees could take marketing swag that other people brought to share.

For this report, I will cover three sessions that I thought were most beneficial, some big theme conference takeaways, and marketing goals to implement in 2020.

Conference Sessions

1. Practical Tips to Improve Your Library's Website

Sherry and Megan Cook

www.RedRokk.com/Libraries

Red Rokk is a Digital Marketing Agency that focuses on branding and web design. They design library templates and provide tips. They said every 3-5 years, we need to think about our library webpage and its redesign. At the end of the day, your website is the most affordable branch to maintain, and your most popular branch.

Homepage:

- Should it look like a mess with stacks of books?
- Don't give too many options. Simplify and focus on a few things.
- It needs to be simple, memorable, appropriate and consistent.

- People are on your homepage for 10-20 seconds.
- Search: Make sure it's prominent. It should be in the header, or does it toggle between the catalog and the website?
- Slides: How many visitors never make it past the first slide of your homepage? 84% of web visitors never make it past the first slide. Is it a crutch to satisfy internal needs? Keep it to 4 slides, and the first slide is prime real estate.

Navigation:

- Simplify the navigation. Don't have too many options. There shouldn't be more than 7 items in the top navigation pane. "What We Have," should be "What You Get." (Focus on the you. What they want)
- Cut the Jargon: What's Freegal? Zinio? No one knows what that is. They know "movie streaming," and we should use layperson terms. What is the call to action? What are the benefits?

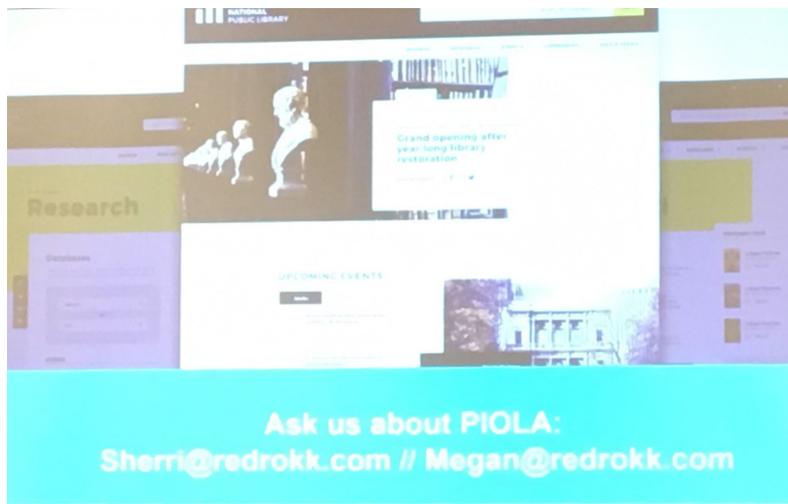
"Stream 13-million Commercial-free songs." Have a CTA (call to action).

Database = online research tool

ILL = borrow from another library

Circulation = check out

Use plain language on websites. Users shouldn't have to become "educated" to use your site.



2. Building Strong Social Media Communications Teams

Stephanie Petruso - Virtual Services Manager, Anne Arundel County Public Library

Alex Zealand - New Media Developer and Web Editor, Arlington Public Library

Why should we have Social Media Teams: Social media has grown organically over the last 10 years. Who is JUST doing social media? No one! It's become so critical to libraries, but it takes time and talent to do it well.

Stephanie and Alex both answered questions related to their libraries and social media.

What does social media look like at Anne Arundel?

- Serves many different communities.
- 16 branches, so the team has a two-year commitment
- They use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. Staff takes a day a week and does 2 platforms.
- They also have a Spanish Facebook page.

Goal: Get people talking

Posting on Facebook is consistent each day, and Anne Arundel has a large following on it. They share pictures of things happening in the branch, and the evening shift has a 9 pm post of something engaging or funny.

Twitter: Here, they are focusing on community stake holders and leaders. They follow people in their community. Who is talking about books? What are people reading? She will jump into people's conversations.

Instagram: They use this to show beautiful photos, hashtags, and geotags to reach community. "Cooking with Books" is an idea for people.

Snapchat: Focuses on teens.

What is their social media "voice?"

Anne Arundel: they have one voice, consistent, no individuality is identified. Use the word "we."

Arlington: They have several voices.

Social Media at Arlington:

She has 20 members on her team. You come on the team and leave as you see fit.

Most of her people like Twitter, because it's easy as far as "adding voices."

Training: Anne Arundel has a "Handbook" and written guidelines. They have a social media photographer. They also use Canva trainings and have 8 meetings per year.

Arlington: People have to follow the guidelines and each team member gets individualized training.

Encouraging Leadership:

What are people excited about?

Stephanie had someone approach her about Snapchat, and it helped connecting them to teens.

Teens are moving away and going to Instagram.

They both said that we need to be ok with saying “this worked for us for three years, and now it’s not.” Redirect your energy in social media.

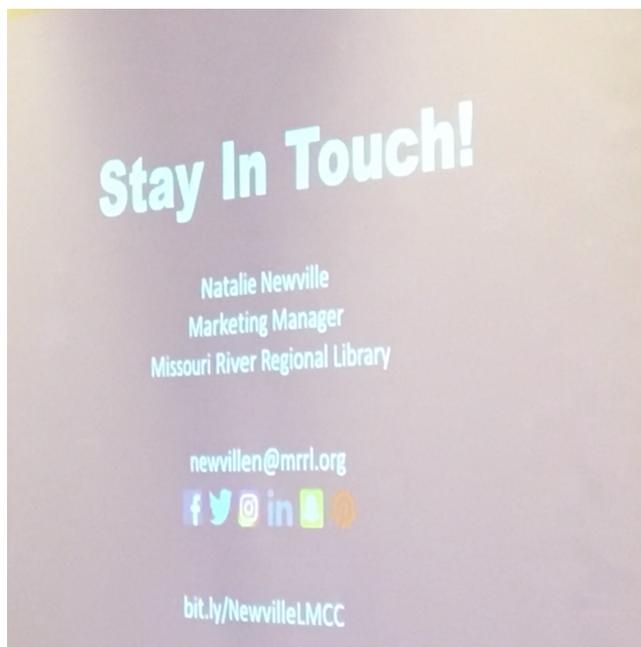
Collaboration Tools: AA uses HeyOrca for planning and scheduling (like Hootsuite), Canva for Work (free for non-profits, have your foundation apply), Instagram has a list that they approve Facebook Group is used as a parking lot, more of a “hey, I saw this.”

3. From Print to Digital: Transforming Your Library Marketing with Strategy and Innovation

Natalie Newville

Marketing Manager

Missouri River Regional Library



Marketing is in Natalie’s background, and she thinks of things in the library as a business. Her library is medium-sized, with one branch and a bookmobile. They serve 90,000 people in their community.

In 2016, her library board board began working on a strategic plan. They created a community survey and hosted community conversations. They took away that people didn’t know what the library offered, and this was eye opening. In 2017, she joined the staff, along with a graphics designer. Their strategic plan has 3 goals, and the first one is on marketing.

Their marketing objective: To Establish the Library as an integral community resource. Everything they do in library marketing goes back to this!

Then, they put their plan into action. They have cut back on using posters.
(they have almost nixed posters)

Where are they marketing:

Calendar: The before one had a lot of content (50-60 programs a month). The new one is more colorful and does more highlighting

Website: A new one was developed.

Newspaper: Their graphics designer has done some cool ads, as the papers cover a lot of their events. She emphasized the importance of developing a relationship with your local reporter.

Radio: This saw enormous growth. The station covers both counties and has the right demographics. This was a hard sell, and they had special board meetings about it. She had the sales person come in and talk to her board. They don't do program-based ads. They advertise their resources.

TV: They don't pour their money into it anymore, but will look at it again.

She recommends sharing newsworthy items with the media, even if you don't think they will care.

Social Media supposed to be social and fun. What social channels do they use?:

Facebook: Their library has 3 different pages.

Instagram: They share fun, library photos.

Twitter: She said their library does not have a great Twitter presence.

You Tube: They do fun videos and post them to their library channel.

Marketing Strategically:

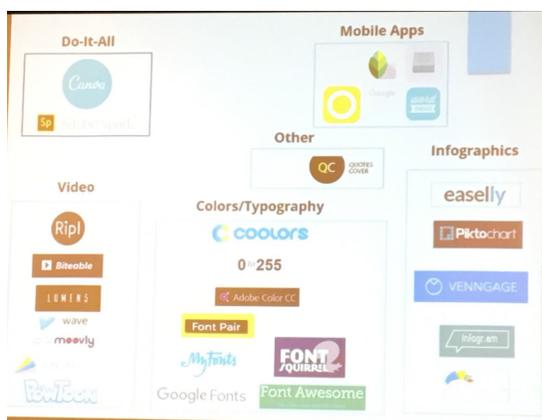
- 1) Create a content calendar
- 2) Analyze results - Facebook and Instagram show your insights. She posted something at 10:30 pm and it had great reach, because people are in bed looking at stuff.
- 3) Look at what needs more marketing? What is down, and what should be doing better?
- 4) Engage and have fun.

Their Results:

Online Reference Databases: 1,875 participants in 2015 to 4,906 in 2018. Now, their Chamber of Commerce uses the library as a selling point with new businesses.

Now What:

- 1) What Needs Improvement
 - Focus on 1-3 areas
- 2) Brainstorm and pull together your team
- 3) Write out a plan (1 week to 1 year)



Big Theme Take-aways:

The following themes came up in several sessions, at the keynotes, and in conference conversations.

- Why are we only marketing programs? Why aren't we doing more marketing of our services? Do people know how libraries have changed? If we don't know who we are, how will our public/communities?
- Posters. Why are we doing so many? They are not a valuable return on investment. They take time, and decent money to produce well. We should start putting our money in digital resources: Facebook ads, website, Google ads.
- It's ok to change your social media tools that you use, as it changes so frequently. Facebook is needed because people are still on there. Teens are leaving Snapchat and moving to Instagram. Instagram is great to feature photos. Twitter is meant more for library professionals, but not our patrons. There's not as great of a patron focus on Twitter.

2020 Goals:

- Create a marketing calendar
- Create Digital Bytes on current marketing trends/strategies.
- Phase out Twitter
- Focus the WVLS fall webinars on Marketing/Communications
- How to create a communications toolkit for our libraries (Digital Byte?)

Long-Term Goals: To create a marketing workshop day, state-wide.