



Stanford's law library used free postcards to promote its Web site.

What do a free throw contest, U.S.

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and a weather radio have in common? You may be surprised. Public relations activities can be strange bedfellows. In this case, their connection reveals marketing efforts by law librarians that are as provocative and enlightening as they are unconventional.

Making the grade through effective PR means revving up the library's communication efforts a few notches.

Potent communication can strengthen the library's value as a dynamic and forceful member of its law school, its university, and even beyond those ivy-covered walls. Academic librarians who have a vision of what they want their libraries to be are prepared to take advantage of any opportunity to showcase their libraries' relevancy and importance to the patron bases they serve.

There are innumerable ways to transform the library into a PR machine. Some of our own colleagues have made the grade by using creative and multi-faceted approaches to PR and marketing, sealing their sphere of influence in the law school and university.

Stanford: Using Postcards to Grab Attention

Erika Wayne, Stanford University Robert Crown Law Library, shared an intriguing and unique library promotional activity that cost her library very little in dollars but has had an immediate and long-lasting impact. She explained that during the past few years, the law library, in collaboration with law school faculty, has developed exciting new Web resources. The library staff wanted to find a way to spread the word and, according to Wayne, "realized the best way to have people find its Web sites was to publicize them on good old-fashioned paper."

The staff considered handouts, but knew they are often filed away and quickly forgotten. Instead they decided to let people know about the site *and* give

them a chance to tell others. "It suddenly dawned on us to use postcards, or in this case, Web cards," Wayne said.

She likened the activity to restaurants and businesses where customers see racks displaying free postcards advertising all sorts of products. "The staff thought Web cards could give our audience a chance to promote our sites," Wayne said. "Not only do they provide a very inexpensive and easy promotion, but they reach out to an audience that we might never otherwise find. And our students love anything that is free."

Another subtle goal of the project was to foster a sense of ownership and pride among the library staff that developed Web projects. The cards were created through an enthusiastic collaborative process, including the library and law faculty members. Initially, five postcards were created, and more have been developed since. Once they were ready, the postcards were placed in faculty and student mailboxes, as well as prominently displayed at the library entrance.

The first postcard developed featured *Women's Legal History Biography Project* (the Clara Shortridge Foltz card), and law professor Barbara Babcock not only mailed the cards to her colleagues and peers, but also took a supply to a couple of conferences. Babcock keeps a stack handy at all times, since they make the perfect stationery to send short notes to colleagues, including Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who wrote back and asked for a supply of these inspirational cards, Wayne said. Success is having one of the most famous women lawyers find your site about famous women lawyers and ask to help advertise it, she added.

The Stanford Robert Crown Library staff also helped create a *Securities Class Action Clearinghouse* Web site and, according to Wayne, wanted to celebrate its second anniversary and market the library. "Instead of buying party invitations, we decided to create lovely Web cards and wrote all of the party details on the back of the card," she said. "The cards were sent to faculty and friends. At the anniversary event, the bright yellow Web cards were given out as party favors, along with other sunny yellow things, like sparkling juice, a carrot cake, and bright yellow decorations."

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PR Academics Making the Grade

by Sue Burch

The postcards are also now being used to promote law school events. Representative Barney Frank (D-Mass.) made a visit to the law school to participate in a public debate, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." At the event, Wayne explained, "the library maintained a table where we handed out the 'Don't Ask' cards and displayed the 'Don't Ask' Web site. The law professor who sponsored the debate formally recognized the library and the staff at this televised event. He also encouraged the audience to stop by the desk and collect a card. Faculty collaboration, a large public audience, and local TV publicity were all part of this PR effort, which enhanced the image of the library as well as its prestige."



College of William and Mary Law Library staff gather before the start of the library's outdoor free throw competition. The library donated money raised from the competition to a national database of bone marrow donors.

Another ingenious use of the postcards is the *Coming Attractions* card, which was developed to create publicity for the Web site outside the library. The Clearinghouse Web site was showcased during a staff member's presentation at the Northern California Association of Law Libraries. To help the group remember this site, as well as others, the librarians decided it would be great "if our audience could take home something smaller and brighter and be able to share it with others," Wayne said. "The Web card was the answer! And, we knew how much librarians love handouts. The Stanford law librarians now use meetings and presentations as opportunities to promote their Web site in a unique way."

The postcards are an extremely enterprising marketing tool that will not only be remembered, but keep the students, faculty and the law library community aware of Stanford's valuable resources on the Web.

William and Mary: Staging Seasonal and One-of-a-Kind Events
Jany Janson and Steve Blaiklock, College of

William and Mary Law Library, have also made the PR grade with their inventive and customized marketing projects. In addition to activities relating to current events and highlighting specific parts of the collection, the library has staged four annual public relations programs. "These seasonal events illustrate the goal of our public relations committee to promote the law library as more than just a building full of books and computers," Janson said. "It's a place where students and faculty feel at home and will want to visit and revisit. The entire law library staff is often enthusiastically involved promoting the library and making it a place where everyone feels welcome."

The school year starts out with the 1-L Ice Cream Social. Blaiklock described this mixer for the incoming first-year class as "an opportunity to introduce the library staff to the new students. It's scheduled near the end of an exhausting week of orientation. Feeding the entire class is no easy undertaking. The library brings in 15 gallons of vanilla and mint chocolate chip ice cream, as well as an assortment of toppings. The students make their own sundaes, while staff members serve them scoops. It's no surprise that everything is usually gone within an hour."

Later in the fall, the library coordinates Lee Denim Day, an annual effort to raise awareness for breast cancer prevention. Donations to the Susan Komen Foundation are collected in return for permission to wear jeans. The library gives out pink awareness ribbons and attracts students to an informative exhibit by providing pink lemonade and sugar cookies.

As the holiday season approaches, the library staff prepares a simple map of the United States on the library's largest bulletin board. Janson and Blaiklock agreed that this is

the most talked-about display in the library. Students are invited to fill out and pin pre-made name tags to their hometowns or wherever they will be spending the semester break. This display brings the students together by providing insight into their personal lives and is always a conversation starter.

In the spring, the law library staff hosts a fundraiser for testing students' compatibility in a national database of bone marrow donors. The timing coincides with college basketball's March Madness, and the library sponsors an outdoor free throw competition (\$1 per free throw) to help raise money for this health issue.

LexisNexis provides soft drinks and pizzas for the hundreds of law students who participate. Local restaurants and golf courses often donate gift certificates, and the winning team will have its name engraved on a trophy. "Many students show up to compete against the faculty; sink a few baskets; or just sit, watch, and eat," Janson said.

The library's biggest hurdle was borrowing a basketball hoop and backboard. This ingenious staff now owns its own hoop—how many law libraries can list that item on their inventories?

The William and Mary Law Library's creativity extends beyond these seasonal projects; it also celebrates one-of-a-kind events. When the new Library of Congress stamp was issued in 2000, a "Second Day of Issue" cancellation stamp was designed just for the William and Mary Law School, the oldest in the U.S., Janson said. The Post Office came to the law school to cancel envelopes. The library opened the event to the general public, and it was enormously popular with the entire college community and stamp collectors in the Williamsburg area.

The PR Committee at William and Mary has done a spectacular job attracting attention to the library; engaging the students in the library events; and ensuring that the law school, college, and community are enthusiastic participants and supporters of its law library.

University of Kentucky: Capitalizing on Emerging Opportunities

There are numerous other ways to make the PR grade. Imagination and inventiveness will go a long way when controversial situations arise. At the University of Kentucky Alvin E. Evans Law Library, "The goal of our PR efforts is to capitalize on those opportunities that come our way and to maximize the use

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of our resources,” said Rebecca Trammell. “We have a small staff who focus most of their PR efforts internally in typical ways: the Web page, faculty notebooks, maps, new student orientation packets, fancy folders with the library logo used for special events, exhibits, holiday food events, and all-around great service.”

She indicated that the library also tries to take advantage of any opportunity to work within the university community because “if no one knows we exist, we won’t be considered for inclusion in events,” she said. “The law library never wants to limit its PR opportunities.”

In Lexington, the new Fayette County Courthouse Law Library was scheduled to be dismantled. The judges needed more space, but the Fayette County Law Library Board was very anxious to preserve the space for the library.

The dean of the College of Law became involved in the discussions and asked his associate dean and Trammell, the director of the law library, to meet with the president of the County Law Library Board and two members of its Board of Trustees. The mayor’s office also asked to be part of

the discussion. Eventually two differing proposals were submitted addressing the library space issue. Trammell examined the space involved, read the two reports and wrote her analysis. Her suggestions for reorganizing the space in the library were accepted. The logjam was broken, and both sides accepted her recommendations.



Ready for any weather emergency, the University of Kentucky Alvin E. Evans Law Library staff arrive at one of the designated “Storm Ready” areas in the law school. Dee Wood (left), Susan Wild, Gloria Kennedy, Donna Bruszewski, Antoinette Fiske, and Heather Harbett.

The result meant that the county law library would remain in the new building, and the judges would also get their needed extra space. As an added benefit, the UK law library received extremely favorable press in

the *Fayette County Bar News*. The president of the County Bar, a UK law graduate, thanked Trammell publicly for her assistance and suggestions, and he was not alone in his praise. The mayor of Lexington (also a UK law graduate) recognized and appreciated the library’s support of the integrity of her town-and-gown philosophy. Trammell didn’t stop there, however. She has pledged to continue to help the county law library succeed.

“We serve broader populations than the law school community, and it’s in our best interest to become an informed participant in those populations,” she said. “Everything I can do to raise our visibility is important, especially when talking to judges, the practicing bar, and city officials.”

The chance to seize another opportunity to promote the UK Law Library, this time outside the usual scope of library services, occurred with the *StormReady* weather program, a program that the National Weather Service designed to prepare the nation’s communities with the communication skills necessary to save lives and property.

In August, the University of Kentucky was certified *StormReady* by the National Weather Service. UK became the fourth