

Promoting Your Law Library and Fundraising via Multimedia:

A Rewarding Team Effort

by Charles H. Oates

Professional Perspectives—Tools and Techniques of the Trade. The Professional Development Committee encourages members to continue to explore topics after presentations at the local, regional, and national levels. We welcome your comments and article suggestions. Please contact Carol Avery Nicholson at 919/962-1199 or carol_nicholson@unc.edu.

The law librarians at Regent University recently made an amazing discovery. We set out to help the university president prepare for an ABA reaccreditation site visit, and ended up with more good will than we could have imagined.

Birth of an Idea

J. Nelson Happy, Dean of our law school, asked me to prepare a computerized slide show presentation illustrating the services we provide and what we are doing to fulfill the missions of the law library and the law school. He suggested that a PowerPoint presentation, similar to one we had done earlier, be shown at the law faculty meeting the following week in the law library. The president was to be the guest of honor. The marching orders were clear, but details were lacking.

The situation demanded a team effort, and quickly. The obvious first step was to assemble the professional staff for a brainstorming session. Many creative ideas emerged.

How the Project Developed

Collectively, we decided to include videos of each member of the law library staff briefly describing his or her background and what s/he does. Our computer services administrator, a member of the professional staff, confirmed that video clips could be inserted into the presentation. Each video clip would be followed by a slide briefly summarizing in bullet form that person's responsibilities. Brief testimonials would be included from several law faculty who use our services extensively, and who are among the most respected and prolific authors on the law faculty. Credits would run at the end, acknowledging noteworthy contributions. The presentation would begin and end with a favorite song of the university president.

The professional staff apportioned responsibilities among themselves. One team planned what each person would say: name, job title, and a brief job description. Educational backgrounds and career goals were included by the

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professional staff and younger paraprofessionals. For older staff nearing retirement, the focus was on longevity and accomplishments. The assistant director offered each person suggestions on what to include in individual presentations.

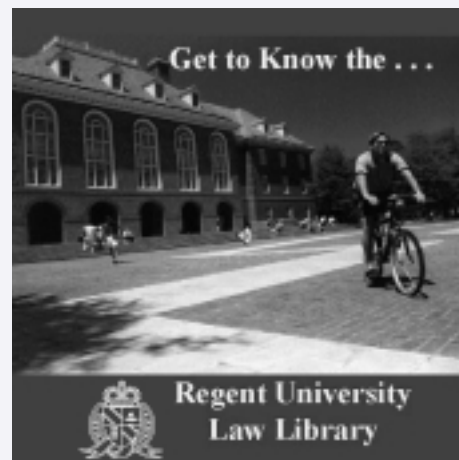
Challenges Encountered and Conquered

Several technological challenges faced us. The first was that video must be digitized before it can be inserted into a PowerPoint presentation. This required that a capture device be attached to the video camera. Capture devices vary considerably in price and features. Our computer services administrator quickly researched the options, then selected an MPEG encoder capture device that gave us full-screen, full-motion video with TV quality (30 frames per second). Ten minutes of MPEG video uses only about 100 megabytes of disk space, about one-tenth of the space

required by less efficient products. Our 20-minute presentation required 200 megabytes of disk space, and needed to be saved to a CD for portability. The price of CD-R and CD-RW (CD recordable and CD re-writable) devices has dropped significantly. The price at a national wholesale club was under \$200 in January. Thus, we recorded the entire multimedia presentation on a CD-R, which can be played on any CD drive.

To achieve more flexibility with the PowerPoint presentation, our assistant director downloaded from the Microsoft Web page free add-ins that included several new templates (some animated), a 3-D rotation, and an animation player, which allows the presentation to be viewed from a Web site with full animation.

A committee of two was appointed to be in charge of the videotaping. Each person was allowed to record his or her own comments in private by means of a remote control. Re-takes were numerous, and the best of each was selected. A single video



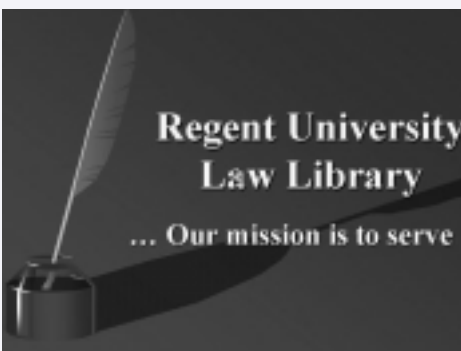
shot was sufficient for one of our staff who was formerly a television news anchor and is currently pursuing a master's degree in communications

A Desktop Learning Opportunity

at Regent. The rest of us were less comfortable speaking to the camera. However, the project overall was a lot of fun for the entire staff, and produced a collective sense of accomplishment.

Overwhelming Response

The response from the president, law faculty, and deans was a pleasant surprise. Immediately after the presentation, the president turned to me, shook my hand, and exclaimed, "That was a fine presentation!" The dean of the law school



expressed appreciation that we had acknowledged him twice during the presentation for the inspiration he had given us for the project and guidance during its production. The response from the law faculty was the most surprising of all. Many times throughout the presentation they broke into thunderous applause in spontaneous expressions of gratitude to specific individuals and departments in the law library.

Immediate Results

Several positive results have emerged. The four endorsements by law professors were of inestimable value. In only two weeks after production, all law library departments noticed a substantial increase in faculty use of law library services. Most notably, there was a significant increase in requests for reference and research assistance and for technology support and training. This documented increase in activity should support our next budget

request for additional professional staff, as well as similar requests in the future.

Goals and Expectations

Ostensibly, the goal of the presentation was to inform and educate the university president in the most intimate way possible about the services provided by the law library. More subtle goals were (1) to increase faculty and administration awareness of the range of support services provided by the law library; (2) to allow each of the library staff to be closely involved in a major team effort; and (3) to create a platform of credibility from which to launch future budget requests to the administration.

The presentation will be modified slightly for use in promoting the law library and its services to potential and incoming students, as well as the local bar. In the near future, we plan to allow universal access to the presentation through the law library Web page.

We are particularly proud of the fact that the law library staff collaborated to put this promotional multimedia project together in less than a week. No outside experts, consultants, or equipment were used.

Fundraising

After seeing the multimedia presentation, our director of development immediately realized its potential for fundraising among law firms in the community. She clearly envisioned the modifications necessary to enable her to raise funds for the law library among local law firms. After a brief meeting in which she explained her vision, we began to make the necessary changes.

The presentation would have to run no longer than seven to eight minutes in order to capture and hold the attention of busy attorneys. It needed a testimonial from a prominent and respected member of the local bar who was familiar with our facilities and services.

Considerable changes are being adopted to focus on the needs of lawyers. We are including information of particular interest to lawyers, such as remote access to reference librarians via e-mail and fax, circulation privileges to members of the local bar, and rapid document delivery by fax.

The presentation will conclude with remarks from the director discussing our plans for growth, including projects that could be of interest to potential donors. Our purpose is to create a bridge that will enable the director of development to challenge law firms to participate financially in the future of this important community asset.

Applicability to Other Libraries

All law librarians contend with budgets. Because these concepts are applicable to other types of libraries, we hope to share our experience with other law librarians.

Charles Oates



This approach should help any law library to support its budget requests while unifying the staff in a fun team effort.

Charles H. Oates (charoat@regent.edu) is Law Library Director and Associate Professor at Regent University School of Law in Virginia Beach, Virginia.