

# TAXING TIMES CALL FOR DRASTIC MEASURES

by Tracey Gray Bridgman

By our nature, librarians are devoted to the task of providing access to information and new technology for the betterment of those we serve. However, with the advent of push technology and the wireless Internet, librarians find themselves in direct conflict with the very services we seek to promote. "What is the solution?" you ask. Well taxing times call for drastic measures.

This spring, capitalize on the misery of the masses by using tax time as a PR opportunity for your library. Our duty to pay taxes is a common thread that binds us all. Due to its commonality, offering a tax promotion not only targets your loyal patrons who already value and utilize your library's resources, it also targets your untapped patron base by attracting renegade law students, independent attorneys, autonomous professors, and self-sufficient support staff. Regardless of your library's service orientation, tax time is the perfect opportunity to promote your library's resources to broaden your patron base.

Perhaps it is time to reconceptualize the focus of our libraries by balancing the notion of information access with a concept of informative instruction that empowers and educates. The key to a tax promotion is to appeal to your absentee patrons based on their common tax needs. It's the standard bait and switch. Before you hand over form 1040A, use the opportunity to educate taxpayers in the many ways that your library can assist in other aspects of their lives, work, research, or studies.

## Advertise

Advertise the availability of tax forms and instructions by creating handouts and flyers, sending e-mail alerts, or prominently displaying the availability of tax materials and other related information on your organization's Internet/intranet sites. Remember to time your advertising campaign early in the year to anticipate the needs of eager taxpayers.

## Finding Aids

Create and distribute Web guides and finding aids that include location information for tax forms, CD-ROM products, and World Wide Web addresses for state and federal tax forms. Provide

Web addresses for Internet sites offering tax advice. Using the Internet to obtain information is one of life's modern conveniences. Inform your users that everything from tax forms to tax advice is accessible from their desktops. Seize the opportunity and be prepared with similar guides and instructional aides for various user groups. For example, when sending tax guides to your human resources department, include targeted guides with useful Internet links for human resource professionals. Inform users of the availability of other resources pertinent to their profession, such as desktop access to labor and employment regulations through the CD-ROM network or via a subscription database.

## Tax Advice

Offer an afternoon tax fair. Arrange for a tax specialist to visit your library to offer a few hours of free tax advice. Depending on your library type, there are many options available for developing a tax advice workshop. Law firm libraries may have on staff a kind tax associate who is willing to donate a few hours to answer simple tax questions. Academic libraries may have a willing tax professor, tax LLM students, or a tax clinic with eager students willing to assist in your cause. Government libraries may have tax professionals on staff or outside contacts with tax specialists who are interested in lending tax advice.

All libraries can contact the IRS to arrange to have a tax specialist or tax educator at their tax fairs. For more information on getting assistance from an IRS educator, visit [www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/taxi/districtcoords.html](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/taxi/districtcoords.html). This page also links to IRS publication 1275, which references various taxpayer education programs offered by the IRS.

## Tax Education Workshops

Let tax season be the jumping off point for your library's new heightened vision as enabler and educator. Seize the teachable tax moment by exhibiting the pedagogical skills of your librarians. Offer tax research classes to students, secretaries, legal assistants, and interested practitioners. One suggestion is to target support staff and new attorneys from your organization's tax practice group with a basic tax research course. Secretaries and legal assistants will especially appreciate the opportunity to improve their skills and personal marketability. Once tax season is over, don't stop there. Work with the momentum gained from your tax success by offering other instructional classes throughout the year targeting various user

groups such as your human resources, employee benefits, and marketing departments.

## Market Your Library's Services

Many librarians spend their energy focusing on the needs of their primary patron base. Very often, we forget that there are other subsets within our organizations that can benefit from our services and expert knowledge. Remember the goal for your tax promotion is to reel them in and hook them. So be prepared to network with your new conquests and to tout your library's resources. Use this occasion to step beyond convention to foster new working relationships with your patrons. Be certain that your new converts walk away knowing that in addition to tax materials, the library is an invaluable resource beneficial to their professional and everyday needs and that their inquiries are always welcomed.

**Tracey Gray Bridgman** ([trb@law.georgetown.edu](mailto:trb@law.georgetown.edu)) is the Resident Librarian at the Edward Bennett Williams Library at Georgetown University Law Center.

*For those of you interested in creating handouts or Web guides for Internet tax sites, the following Web addresses will give you a head start in preparing your guide.*

## Federal Tax Forms

- IRS ([www.irs.gov/forms\\_pubs/forms.html](http://www.irs.gov/forms_pubs/forms.html))

## State Tax Forms

- Federation of Tax Administrators ([www.taxadmin.org/fta/forms.ssi](http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/forms.ssi))
- Tax Accounting Sites Directory (<http://www.taxesites.com/state.html>)
- Site Seeker Tax Resources (<http://www.kentis.com/siteseeker/taxlink.html>)

## Tax Advice

- IRS ([http://www.irs.gov/tax\\_edu/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/tax_edu/index.html))
- Tax Planet (<http://www.taxplanet.com/taxseason/taxseason.html>)
- Tax Web (<http://www.taxweb.com/faqs/index.html>)

## Tax Glossaries

- TaxCut ([www.taxcut.com/taxtips/tax\\_terms/glosstoc.html](http://www.taxcut.com/taxtips/tax_terms/glosstoc.html))
- University of Minnesota, Tax Research Abbreviations and Acronyms (<http://busref.lib.umn.edu/tools/tax-res.html>)