



Figure 1

Brochure holders improve visibility and organization of brochures, as well as save precious desk and wall space from getting cluttered.

Controlling the Confetti

Learn How to Organize the Visual Information in Your Library

by Amy Hale-Janeke

The Career Development Task Force, which coordinates the Desktop Learning Opportunity Series, encourages members to explore professional development offerings and opportunities at the local, regional, and national levels. We welcome your comments and article suggestions. Please contact Phyllis Marion at 619/525-1429 or pmarion@cwsf.edu.



Confetti is great for celebrations, but not for a law library. Many times there are so many flyers and signs on the walls or counters that it looks like a ticker tape parade has just come through. How can you control this confetti while getting patrons to pay more attention to what you are disseminating? Though the answer is simple—organization and ease of access to information—the implementation is often a bit more complex.

We all know that most law libraries have information contained in brochures and flyers that either does not get seen or is not readily available for use by patrons. For example, a flyer stuck on a wall may pique someone's interest in the subject, but if there is no flyer available for him or her to take, he or she will probably either forget the information or take the flyer, depriving the next person of the information. Brochures are useful too, but only if they catch the attention of viewers long enough to interest them in taking the information.

San Diego County Public Law Library had a variety of brochures, program flyers, signs, and research guides that we wanted people to see, but we were running out of space to post them. We also needed a way to organize our visual information that would allow patrons easy access and save wall

and counter space. We finally faced up to our confetti problem and came up with some solutions that worked for us and may work for you, too.

Conserve Space

First, we knew that we needed to attract patron attention without cluttering our limited desk and wall space. We started by looking at various office supply product catalogs to see what kind of paper organization solutions they offered. The first item we noticed was a nine-item acrylic brochure holder (see Figure 1). We decided to purchase two holders and see if they improved the visibility and organization of our brochures.

We placed the first brochure rack at the circulation front desk and filled it with brochures about library hours, extended services, and our classes. We positioned the second rack at the reference desk and filled it with brochures on various legal topics that we order from the state bar.

We noticed an immediate improvement. Brochures were picked up and examined by more patrons than when they had simply been piled on the desk. In fact, we are glad that we needed to refill the brochure racks regularly.

Organize Information

Encouraged by our success, we decided to tackle the larger problem of organizing our flyers. We decided that a nice cloth-covered bulletin board would be attractive and functional, so we turned once again to our office supply catalogs.

We found a couple of cloth-covered bulletin boards that come with large hooks to hang on the cubicle dividers that make up our circulation area. We purchased two boards and devoted one to legal job information and upcoming seminars. The second bulletin board is reserved for information about current classes, legal

clinics, and seminars that we offer.

We placed the boards in high-traffic areas of the library, resulting in not only a neater display, but also a centralized information location. However, we found

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- 1 Core Competencies
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- 4 Information Technology
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- 6 Teaching

This article addresses the AALL Specialized Competencies on Library Management. The complete AALL statement of Competencies of Law Librarianship is online at www.aallnet.org/prodev/competencies.asp.

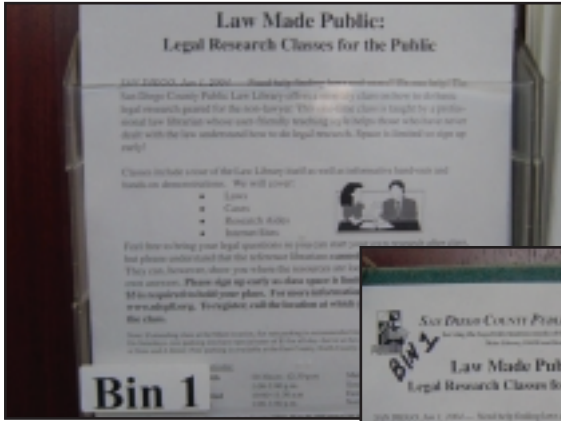


Figure 2

that our boards were too successful—the flyers kept disappearing. We kept extras at the reference desk, but people would not ask for copies. Instead, they would take down the flyers, photocopy them, and either return the flyers to the wrong place or simply walk off with them. We were glad to see that the information was in demand, but we were spending a lot of time replacing flyers.

Make Flyers Available

Our solution was to go back and consult the office supply catalog. We found a picture of a magazine display rack and decided it would be a good solution to the flyer organization problem. We purchased the rack and used hooks to hang it over the cubicle divider next to the class and clinic information bulletin board.

We labeled the bins with numbers one through nine (see Figure 2). Then we used a marker and wrote a number on the top of the flyer that corresponded with the bin in which the flyer was located (Figure 3). This seemed like a great solution, and we promptly placed a stack of flyers in each bin.

Unfortunately, once the stack of photocopied flyers was placed in the bin, they had a tendency to slump over. We wanted them to be more visible, so we got 8 1/2" by 11" pieces of cardboard and stapled a flyer onto each piece. Then we placed that piece in the front of the bin so that each flyer was clearly visible. We placed extras behind the cardboard mounts so patrons could simply reach behind to take a flyer.

This system has been in place for about a year and has worked wonderfully. It has allowed us to be more organized and allowed patrons to have easy access to myriad flyers.

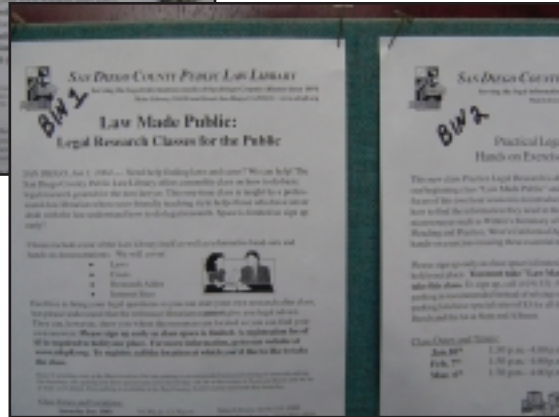


Figure 3

Providing flyers in numbered bins that correspond to displayed flyers makes it easier for patrons to find specific flyers and cuts down on the number of flyers that disappears from displays.

The magazine display idea worked so well that we decided to purchase a second one to put in our reading room for our computer research guides. We do not have a bulletin board display mounted in the reading

room because of space considerations, but we did place the second magazine rack next to the computer workstations. We use tabletop acrylic holders to display the flyers, and the letter at the top of the flyer corresponds to the letter of the bin in the reading room.

Give Clear Directions

Our final project was to tackle our directional signs. We often have classes and programs in different parts of our library and wanted a nice way to direct people to the correct place without installing a permanent sign. Our solution was to purchase a laminator and some colored paper.

We typed up various routing signs, copied them onto the colored paper, and laminated them. This

not only looks more professional, but it also makes the signs last longer. When we have a class in a certain part of the library, the signs go up. When the program is over, the signs come down until they are needed again.

We do have a couple of signs that are semi-permanent, such as our classroom signs (see Figure 4). Previously we had an average of three to five questions a day about the location of the classroom from patrons taking classes. Our classroom is in a relatively hidden part on our third floor, and we knew that we needed a series of signs—not just one—to help people figure out where to go.

We made up some signs with arrows on bright yellow paper and laminated them. After it was in place for a few weeks, we were no longer receiving as many questions because patrons were able to find the classroom on their own using the signs.

A side benefit of purchasing the lamination tool was that we started using it to laminate some of our sample forms. Many times we would hand out sample proofs of service only to have them disappear because patrons didn't want to go to the trouble of making a photocopy. Now we have laminated our samples, and they always come back to the desk.

We continue to look for ways to improve the organization of our information, not only to serve our patrons, but also to provide a pleasant and less stressful working environment. I hope our experience gives you an idea of how to



Figure 4

Well-displayed directional signs help patrons to find certain locations and saves staff from answering repetitive questions about where to find a particular room.

control the confetti of flyers and information around your law libraries.

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