

Looking Back, Moving Forward @ your library

The Campaign for America's Libraries gears up for another five years by Deborah Davis

More than 20,000 academic, school, public, and special libraries across the country are participating in ALA's Campaign for America's Libraries, taking advantage of a wealth of tools and resources. Noting the success of the campaign in supporting the public-awareness and advocacy efforts of local libraries nationwide, the ALA Executive Board voted unanimously in January (*AL*, Mar., p. 62) to extend the campaign for another five years, dovetailing with the Association's new strategic plan, *ALA Ahead to 2010*.

As ALA Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels stated to the Executive Board at its spring meeting, the "@ your library" campaign has yielded a strong return on investment. The Association's contribution to the campaign over the last five years has been \$1.7 million. As a result of investments by ALA divisions, LSTA funding committed by a number of states, cash and in-kind contributions by campaign partners, and the value of national television and print PSAs the campaign has secured to date, the return is estimated to be more than \$21 million, a 13-to-1 ratio.

The smartest campaign

One of the strongest commitments to the campaign is the Public Library Association's "Smartest Card. Get It. Use It. @ your library" campaign, now in full swing. Officially launched last September during Library Card Sign-up Month, the Smartest Card campaign is a three-year commitment to make the library card "the most valuable card in your wallet."

Public libraries have jumped on board. North Carolina was among the first to coordinate a statewide effort. Using a \$110,000 LSTA leadership project grant, the State Library of North Carolina orchestrated a Smartest Card campaign across the state. More than 65 public library systems, representing 210 libraries, participated. The state library provided a wide variety of resources to help public libraries get the word out about the Smartest Card, including media relations support, promotional materials, and a clearinghouse to share marketing ideas.

According to Pamela Jaskot, communications program consultant for the state library, "The Smartest Card campaign has provided us with a terrific opportunity to create a statewide effort in which libraries can adapt campaign materials and messages for their own needs to help promote library card use and enrollment."

So what were some of the highlights?

- 125 news stories generated more than 1.6 million "media impressions" (the number of people who saw or heard the message) in newspapers, and on TV and radio.

- The governor issued a proclamation and across the state local officials endorsed it, visited their libraries, signed up for library cards, and read to children at story hour. The H. Leslie Perry Memorial Library

in Henderson even put its county officials to work behind the circulation desk.

- The state library distributed 100,000 Smartest Card tote bags, bookmarks, and door hangers with the campaign logo at no cost to participating libraries.

- Children across the state sported "Smartest Card" shoelaces, as did the director of the Harnett County Public Library, who laced up her Reeboks.

- Polk County Public Library recruited a car dealer to mount the door hangers on his showroom's cars.

- The Wayne County Public Library received more than 100 entries in an essay contest titled "Why My Library Card is the Smartest Card Ever," which was sponsored by a number of businesses and community organizations.

"I liked the fact that this was a statewide effort," says Robert Fisher, director of the Robeson County Public Library. "People were able to find out about the campaign in ways not always available to small markets The campaign was successful in that we had ways to remind people of the usefulness of the public library."

Librarian Joan Sherif from the Northwestern Regional Library in Elken adds, "Our regional system benefited from the materials and focus. . . as well as tying us to other libraries in the state and nation."

Maryland also has joined in the Smartest Card campaign, not only to increase library card use but also to create an awareness about the importance of funding the state's libraries. The Maryland Library Association began the advocacy effort to make this happen by securing a Smartest Card photo opportunity with the governor and key legislators. This gave MLA members the chance to have face-to-face conversations about



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the value of Maryland's libraries and their services. It was also an opportunity to share the positive results of a telephone survey conducted by Potomac Incorporated, a professional polling group, in September 2003. That survey found that Maryland citizens: use their public libraries in large numbers, rate them as a top local public service, support library improvements, want to live near public libraries, see their local public libraries as essential, think libraries have a positive impact on a community, view libraries as a solid tax investment, and look to libraries for lifelong learning. Librarians across the state presented these findings to state legislators before they headed off for the General Assembly session in January.

These findings served as the catalyst to get bipartisan funding legislation introduced and ultimately gain unanimous support of a new funding bill that is now making its way to the governor to be signed into law. This will result in a per capita increase from \$12 to \$16 over the next four years.

According to Kathleen Reif, director of St. Mary's County Memorial Library and chair of the PLA "@ your library" Taskforce, "The Smartest Card campaign and its 'Get It. Use It. @ your library' message was a springboard to help us tell our story to key policymakers. It helped give us the visibility we needed to make the case about how critical Maryland's libraries are to its citizens."

St. Mary's County Library got into the act itself by launching a year-long campaign urging all 90,000 county residents to get their library cards. The campaign began with an official proclamation declaring September 2004–September 2005 as "St. Mary's County Library Card Get It. Use It. Year." Photos were taken with residents and community leaders, including the governor, county commissioners, and Miss Maryland holding up their library cards above a caption saying they have their cards and asking, "Do you?" Those photos were run in the local paper and showcased in libraries around the county.

Catch the Redbird spirit

"Libraries on university campuses are so much more than warehouses and have been for a long time. But we haven't done a very good job of telling our story," says Toni Tucker, assistant to the dean for public relations and outreach at Milner Library at Illinois State University at Normal. So Tucker and her staff turned to the "@ your library" campaign for assistance.

In fact, Milner Library has been involved in the Campaign for America's Libraries since the beginning. As early as 2001, the year the campaign officially kicked off, the library has been utilizing the "@ your library" brand to promote its programs and services. They have given away "@ your library" merchandise to promote the library during student orientation and throughout the school year. They placed ads in the student newspaper, developed a poster-size calendar of events, and used "@ your library" in a student planner that was given to all freshmen and transfer students. They also created door hangers and Post-It notes that say "Ask a Librarian @ your library."

Most recently, Milner Library developed a marketing plan to address perceptions about the library's services and collections and to increase awareness about the library both on and off campus. That plan won the library a second-place Best Practices in Marketing @ your library Award from ALA's Association of College and Research Libraries. Funded by the ACRL Friends, the one-time award was given to academic or research libraries that demonstrated a best practices marketing program using the "@ your library" trademark.

According to ACRL Marketing Academic and Research Libraries Committee Chair Frank D'Andraia, Milner's marketing project "is noteworthy for its effective aggregation of the '@ your library' message, its successful involvement of a wide range of Milner Library personnel, and its ability to ensure the plan is effective by having an assessment component."

Tucker notes, "It takes strong, in-

ventive, unique public relations and marketing programs to ensure both the campus and the community knows and understands all that we can do and can be. Having the ALA '@ your library' initiative provided the foundation in which to create key statements that carry out the library's message."

The first-place winner of the Best Practices in Marketing "@ your library" Award was American University for its "Ask @ your library" marketing effort. The program responded to undergraduate concerns about library facilities and collections by informing students and scholars about major building improvements and enhanced resources. The goal was to increase awareness of AU Library's many offerings. The marketing plan drew upon a variety of sources including ACRL's "@ your library" Toolkit for Academic and Research Libraries. It also made use of partnerships with campus units and resources developed by professional organizations.

"ACRL's '@ your library' initiative coincided perfectly with the marketing efforts that were part of American University Library's strategic plan," says University Librarian Pat Wand. "It allowed us to bring together the ACRL '@ your library' Toolkit with a group of particularly creative minds who comprised our newly established marketing team."

Back to the future

When ALA members spoke up in 1999 and said that the Association needed to do more to educate the public about the value of libraries, the ALA Executive Board responded with the Campaign for America's Libraries. Five years later, ALA members have once again identified public awareness and advocacy as critical goals for the Association's new strategic plan, ALA Ahead to 2010.

The Campaign for America's Libraries was designed to update the image of libraries and librarians for the 21st century, sustaining and strengthening their relevance; bring renewed energy to the promotion of libraries; increase public awareness

about the value of libraries, librarians, and library workers; and in the long run, increase support for libraries and library issues including funding, recruitment, and public policy.

The campaign also needed to be useful to all types of libraries. In that spirit, one of the primary objectives was to create tools, resources, and materials that could be utilized by academic, school, public, and special libraries to reach their respective constituencies. The initiative was also conceived as an opportunity to share best practices in public relations and advocacy among the library community.

Over the years, ALA's public awareness and advocacy efforts have greatly enhanced the image and influence of ALA, libraries, and all library workers. During the past five years, the Campaign for America's Libraries has been a centerpiece of these efforts. As the first branded communications program and the largest public education and advocacy initiative the Association has ever undertaken, the campaign has been used by more than 20,000 libraries, 40 state chapters, and 20 state library agencies.

According to an ALA-member survey conducted in the spring and summer of 2003 by the ALA Office for Research and Statistics, 90% of respondents indicated they were aware of the campaign and 87% said it was a good thing for ALA to do. Two-thirds of survey participants indicated they were participating in the campaign.

The campaign has furthered ALA's advocacy efforts by making our voices heard at the local, state, and national levels around such issues as funding, better salaries, recruitment, and the USA Patriot Act. ALA's media relations efforts integrate the campaign's key messages at all possible opportunities so that advocates are speaking in one voice about libraries and the profession. Those messages have reached hundreds of millions of people over the last five years with national media placements on CNN, the NBC Nightly News, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and National Public Radio, to name a few.

The campaign also has helped ALA gain national visibility for libraries, librarians, and other library workers in new and creative ways. A campaign partnership with ABC-TV that began in 2001, for example, has resulted in 25 celebrity television spots with library messages that have reached millions of people. Editorial coverage in *Woman's Day* magazine about libraries, librarianship, and literacy has reached over 4 million readers—a value of over \$1 million per year, had the space been purchased.

"@ your library" print PSAs with library funding messages have appeared in *Woman's Day*, *Redbook*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Ms.*, and *Family Circle*, totaling \$500,000 in free ad space and reaching more than 11 million readers. A new "Smartest Card" PSA recently appeared in *Parents*, *Redbook*, *Ms.* magazines. In these two publications alone, the PSA reaches over 4 million readers and is valued at more than \$220,000.

Celebrities in government, entertainment, and sports—including Laura Bush, Caroline Kennedy, Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, skateboarding legend Tony Hawk, and various Major League Baseball players—have lent their names to the campaign.

Most recently, George Lopez, star of his own comedy series, became the spokesperson for PLA's "Smartest Card" campaign, lending his image to new posters and television and his voice to radio PSAs promoting library card use and enrollment. ABC released the Lopez television PSAs to its 225 affiliates in February as part of a package of new spots featuring daytime and primetime stars. The partnership with ABC has helped ALA extend its reach with messages to ABC viewers and has generated publicity for libraries worth hundreds of thousands of dollars in production costs and airtime fees that ALA could never afford otherwise.

The campaign's "Save America's Libraries" initiative has provided a variety of tools to help libraries rally locally against budget cuts. Materials include a comprehensive toolkit,

video, television PSA, and library funding website. National Library Workers Day, an initiative of the ALA Allied Professional Association, is now a permanent part of ALA's National Library Week's activities, which are branded "@ your library."

Since the inception of the campaign, nearly 100 advocacy trainings specific to "@ your library" have taken place across the country with approximately 5,000 librarians participating. Dozens of other trainings have focused on general advocacy. Working with ALA's Library Advocacy Now Network, the campaign is supporting Association-wide advocacy efforts with new tools, materials, and training, including the first Advocacy Institute, which took place during the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Boston. Some 235 people attended (*AL*, Mar., p. 45).

Three ALA divisions—ACRL, PLA, and the American Association of School Librarians—have developed their own "@ your library" campaigns geared toward the specific needs and interests of their members. Together, they have distributed over 30,000 "@ your library" toolkits to date; developed new campaign websites; set up several new electronic discussion lists to share best practices among division members; and planned and implemented strategic marketing, train-the-trainer, and advocacy training sessions. ALA's Association for Library Service to Children is up next, with a new campaign promoting the value of children's library service scheduled to launch next year.

In response to member and ALA Council requests, the campaign will also be working with the Office for Literacy and Outreach Services on a new advocacy effort to promote the value of rural school, tribal, native, and public libraries. The Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services and the Association of Rural and Small Libraries will collaborate on the project.

The campaign has forged national partnerships to extend ALA's reach and amplify its messages. ALA recently launched the fourth year of "Join the Major Leagues @ your

library,” an information-literacy program with Major League Baseball valued at \$2 million per year. PLA, Reforma, ALSC, the Hispanic Heritage Baseball Museum, and the National Baseball Hall of Fame are supporting this year’s program, which includes materials in both English and Spanish.

During National Library Week in April, 15 community college and public libraries hosted free writers workshops in conjunction with *Woman’s Day* magazine as part of the multi-year partnership. To date, more than 45 libraries across the country have seen sold-out crowds at these workshops. *Woman’s Day’s* readers also have learned about libraries and librarianship through an online book-club featuring ALA members.

The newest campaign partnership, with Walgreens, has provided grant money to 10 library systems around the country to promote health-education seminars that address some of

the hottest healthcare topics today, such as the cost of medications; generic versus brand-name drugs; understanding over-the-counter medications; and modern epidemics such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma. Those seminars are scheduled through November.

Worldwide advocacy

The campaign also has been global right from the start. Strong interest from the international library community resulted in a partnership with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) that kicked off in the summer of 2001. Since then, 28 countries and the Commonwealth of Caribbean Islands have signed international trademark agreements to bring a Campaign for the World’s Libraries to their respective nations. They include Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada (seven provinces), El Salva-

dor, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Mexico, Moldova, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Singapore, Turkey, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

A webcast for international librarians is planned for the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago to highlight the world campaign, and a program at the August 14–18 IFLA Conference in Norway will share the “@ your library” successes of several European countries with other international campaign participants.

As the first five years of the campaign come to a close and ALA looks ahead to 2010, members are once again looking for public awareness and advocacy to rise to the top of the priority list. ALA will be exploring new ways to increase public awareness of the value and impact of libraries, the library profession, and all library staff. Continuing to make use of the Campaign for America’s will help ensure we do just that. ❖

Campaign Tools and Resources

The Campaign for America’s Libraries website at www.ala.org/@yourlibrary/ provides tools and materials to get involved, including divisional toolkits and websites. New and recent tools include the following:

Save America’s Libraries Campaign Toolkit

ALA’s Public Information Office has updated a toolkit to help libraries address budget cuts, which includes a funding fact sheet, tips and strategies on how to organize a rally, and sample press materials, at www.ala.org/Source/SALtoolkit.pdf. A video, television PSA, and funding website at www.ala.org/ala/news/libraryfunding/libraryfunding.htm is also available.

George Lopez TV and Radio PSAs

The star of ABC’s comedy series *George Lopez* and the spokesperson for PLA’s new “Smartest Card Campaign,” appears in new PSAs featuring library messages. The spots are 30 seconds and 15 seconds in length and can be customized. Two of the spots feature the “Smartest Card,” one highlights “Today’s Library” and another showcases librarians as the “Ultimate Search Engine.” To order, go to www.ala.org/@yourlibrary/ and click on the George Lopez icon.

“Join the Major Leagues” Trivia Contest

Developed by ALA and Major League Baseball, “Join the Major Leagues @ your library” is a 21st century information-literacy initiative with an online baseball trivia contest

as its centerpiece. The contest is open to all ages and runs through September 9. Trivia questions were developed by the library staff at the National Baseball Hall of Fame. The program website is available in both English and Spanish at www.ala.org/@yourlibrary/jointhemajorleagues.

Woman’s Day Online Bookclub

Members of ALA’s Young Adult Library Services Association provide book recommendations for young adults at www.womansday.com/community. Recommended titles will be added every three weeks through May 2006. Librarian bios and photos are also featured.

“Be Well Informed” Seminars

A partnership between ALA and Walgreens, this national consumer-health initiative is taking place in 10 library systems nationwide. Libraries are holding free seminars on the hottest topics including Medicare drug discount card, over-the-counter medications, understanding medication beyond the label, and modern epidemics including diabetes and asthma. Seminars run through November. All libraries may access the resources for the project at <https://cs.ala.org/ra/bewellinformed/resources.cfm>.

ALA seeks your feedback as the campaign begins to plan for its next five years. A member survey that will guide the campaign’s future goals and activities can be found online at www.ala.org/@yourlibrary/planthefuture/.