THE EFFINGHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY

Marketing Plan

2020

Created July 2020

Our Vision

The Effingham Public Library: A catalyst for positive action.

Our Mission

The Effingham Public Library creates unique opportunities to connect with literature, learning, and the community.

Our Values

Connection
Service

Background

This year the Marketing Plan is being created during unprecedented circumstances. The Library building was closed mid-March due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and remains closed with full opening and a return to normal services and programming unlikely this year.

The Effingham Public Library is the tax-supported city library of Effingham, Illinois, serving a population of approximately 12,627 at the 2018 census estimate. Effingham is located in the east-central part of the state, approximately 100 miles east of St. Louis, 200 miles south of Chicago and 140 miles west of Indianapolis.

The Library has over 50,000 books, magazines, and audio-visual materials. It is a member of the Illinois Heartland Library System. It has a nine member board of trustees that set policy and establish services.

In FY2019, circulation reached 269,744. This was the 12th straight year that the library achieved growth in its circulation numbers. However, the closure of the library building mid-March 2020, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, led to a decrease in the circulation number to 254,732 (down 6%) at the end of FY2020. While digital downloads have increased by 33% this year, they still only account for 9% of the total circulation.

The summer reading challenge remains the most popular and heavily attended library program, serving over 1300 children and teens in 2019. This year the Summer Read Challenge is even more important than ever with local students expected to out of in-building schooling for at least 6 months and many struggling with either online schooling due to lack of internet/hardware or making the adjustment to a very suddenly different type of schooling.

An increasing number of library programs take place outside the building, averaging about 16% of all programming. This includes the highly successful Early Literacy Outreach project and story time visits to Head Start and Effingham County Connections.

There were a total of 3,968 in use library cards as of April 30, 2020. City resident cards number 3454, this a 27% redemption rate for the City. Non-resident card numbers stood at 514 as of April 30, 2020, decreasing from a recent high of 740 (4/30/2018)).

Further changes are seen as use of library public access Internet computers declined by 25%. This reflects the shift away from computers to mobile devices. We have been tracking Wi-Fi access for just 18 months and that usage increased slightly.

Key Development
At the beginning of preparing this plan the library building has been closed due to the Covid-19 Pandemic for over 8 weeks. We do not know exactly how long Covid-19 will impact the delivery of library services and programming; public health groups like the CDC and WHO are expecting it to take 12 to 18 months for a vaccine to be developed. The library by its nature supports many residents in vulnerable groups

and needs to ensure it supplies its services in a way that is safe for staff and patrons alike.

The library has come through an extended period of growth in circulation and programming numbers. Its traditional system for delivering items, services and programs has now been disrupted by the Pandemic and the library needs to find a way to not only maintain connection with its patrons but also usage. There is an opportunity to take advantage of the disruption to public behaviour to show the value of its services, whether in person or remotely, and demonstrate to our community that the library is more than a building.

Over the last 2 years the library has initiated a large increase in its outreach work which has been warmly received by the community but has generated an increase in card redemption rates.

The marketing budget for FY2021 will be $11,755, a reduction of $2,000 on the planned budget. This is in anticipation of a drop in property values and tax revenue caused by the large scale unemployment levels triggered by the pandemic and a need to boost digital services during the current and any future extended closures of the library building.

The Library no longer has a dedicated Marketing Coordinator and instead uses a group of talented library staff with different levels of design training and experience, to create marketing material, images and videos. There is a need to ensure a consistency in approach, look, feel and tone and updated marketing guidelines will be needed to ensure this. Overall strategy is developed by the Programming Outreach Manager and approved by the Management Team. Each member of the library staff plays a vital role implementing this plan.

MARKETING GOALS

Increase community awareness throughout Effingham County of the Effingham Public Library and its services in preparation for a Library District vote.

Increase the library card redemption rate both within the City Limits and in non-resident areas and ensure that the card is actively used.

Increase use of digital services both for card-holder and non-card-holders.

Increase fundraising activity.

Target Markets

The priority targets are:
- Effingham city residents who are not yet library card holders.
- Non-residents in Effingham County that reflect the most active current card-holders.
- Current card holders who have not yet used their card.
- Community, education, business and government leaders, whose opinions and influence can enhance perceptions of the library throughout the County.

Positioning Statement

The Effingham Public Library is a vibrant and welcoming Library conveniently located in the downtown area of Effingham. With a 27,000 sq. ft. building, the library and its dedicated staff provide the resources and services of a library one might expect to find in a more urban area. Run by a committed and dynamic team, the library staff strives at all times to make the Effingham Public Library one of the best small libraries in the country.

Marketing Tagline
Marketing will reinforce the brand through use of the new tagline and clear and consistent messages.

"We Make Community Happen"

This tagline represents where the library desires to move—to be the place that the community can turn to for connection, action, and understanding.

MARKETING STRATEGY

Goal 1
Increase community awareness throughout Effingham County of the Effingham Public Library and its services in preparation for a Library District vote.

Objective
- Increase the proportion surveyed viewing library services as very or extremely valuable from 71 to 75%.
- Increase the number surveyed willing to pay tax for a library service from 61 to 65%.
- Sign up 1,500 children for Summer Reading in 2021, of which one third to come from outside the city limits.

Strategy
- Connect with at least 2 new organizations that primarily serve either the whole county or residents outside of Effingham.
- Continue building relationships with area schools, non-profits and local businesses through floating libraries at schools, and annual county school visits.
- Submit 4 PR stories about how the library brings community to Effingham County.
- Host at least 2 online community conversations or presentations around topics of interest for countywide adult audiences by the end of 2020.
- Host at least 2 online STEAM programs that target Kindergarten through 4th grade.

- Annual county wide survey for users and non-user.
- Inform local elected officials of all the library is doing.
- Share 2 bi-annual updates on Books for Baby numbers.
  - Look for grant to replenish supplies in 2021.
- Promote 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten
  - Submit annual Back to School Press Release on 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten.
  - Share stories of children reaching new levels and welcoming sign ups on social media.

Goal 2

Increase the library card take-up rate both within the city limits and in non-resident areas, and lower the non-usage rate of library cards.

Objective
- Register 20 more non-resident cardholders over previous year by end of 2020.
- Increase resident card redemption by 5% by end of 2020.

Strategy
- Launch on-boarding email series.
- Begin welcome calls to new patrons.
- Begin non-resident renewal call and survey.
- Launch new items email.
- Develop patron story campaign around "what my library does for me."
- Develop relationships with local churches and Effingham County Chamber to support new arrivals.
- Begin annual phone call to patrons.
- Research library automation.

Goal 3
Increase use of digital services both for card-holder and non-card-holders.

Objective
- Increase digital downloads by 50% to 33,000 end of 2020.
- Achieve 125 Hoopla Engage sign ups by August 1 2020 and 125 new Hoopla users by end of 2020.

Strategy
- Create monthly digital resource email.
- Share social media posts about benefits of digital downloads and popular items.
- Complete an annual review of all contents and links on website.
- Update online resources website page.
- Research library apps.

Goal 4
Increase fundraising activity.

Objective
- Raise $50,000 per annum in fundraising.
- Increase active donor base by 10%.

Strategy
- Develop annual campaign.
- Develop online giving campaign.
- Create monthly fundraising stories.
- Host donor Thank You event.
- Begin donor phone calls twice a year.

Evaluation Strategy

We will use the Annual Progress Report, fundraising report and annual consumer research to measure success. The Annual Progress Report includes statistics on circulation, ILL, new library cards issued, computer use, library programming, etc. The annual consumer survey tracks trends in attitudes and consumer behaviours and allows us to better understand users and non-users.

The Programming Outreach Manager will write a report yearly to update the Board on the Marketing Plan's implementation.