

**A TALE OF
FOUR
PATRONS:
OMNICHANNEL
MARKETING
FOR LIBRARIES**

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A TALE OF FOUR PATRONS: OMNICHANNEL MARKETING FOR LIBRARIES

Summary

Omnichannel marketing provides customers with a seamless, personalized experience across channels and devices (Sivadas). For libraries, this means the library website, app, and social media channels are as integrated as possible, and users who opt-in to personalized services will receive more relevant information about the topics they are interested in, giving them a richer experience inside and outside the library. This capstone will take you on a journey with four library patrons as they use the library to find the materials and services they need, and how omnichannel marketing improves their experience.

Introduction

Today's libraries continue to fulfill their mission to provide equal access to accurate and timely information, educational resources, and innovative programming that meets the needs of the community. Libraries depend on funds from city or county allocations, property taxes, state and federal funding and grants, and general community support to continue to operate, making it necessary for libraries to find budget friendly, efficient, and effective ways to promote their services, garner support, and meet demand (Garcia). It sounds like a monumental task, and the library's marketing team certainly has its work cut out for them.

It is important to note that marketing is more than advertising products and services; it's about messaging that embodies the organization's values and mission. Marketing happens when you ask, "How can we do this better?" It inspires us to take action and deliver on our promises.

Marketing not only keeps the organization itself on track, but when your messaging is sent out into the world, it finds your audience, makes connections, and builds community.

What is omnichannel marketing, and why is it different than multichannel marketing?

Multichannel marketing is about being everywhere, and omnichannel marketing is about being fully present in the moment. The goal is to personalize at all points of interaction with the user, regardless of where that touchpoint is. Organizations may feel pressure to be on all social media platforms, but with new platforms arising on a regular basis, this can spread your marketing efforts far too thin. Omnichannel marketing gives organizations and businesses the ability to focus on the best platforms for their audience, and then target ways to make those touchpoints a richer, more productive experience for the user.

Imagine you are on the library's website, searching one of their databases for a magazine article. You use the library's chat bot to find out more about how to find that particular article and try to type in all the relevant search terms so the chat bot gives you quality results. Chat bots have their limitations, so at some point you decide you want to talk to a human. You've braced yourself to repeat all the information about the article you are looking for, so when you connect with the librarian via the Ask a Librarian chat window, you are pleasantly surprised that they already have all the information you had entered with the chat bot, so instead of starting over, the conversation continues. That conversation can be preserved and brought with you to the library via a library app for further assistance and exploration.

The goal of omnichannel marketing is to address pain points, big and small, that we often take for granted when using technology. It is enjoyable for the staff and the user to encounter delightful little surprises along the customer service path. Omnichannel marketing can do that for the library and its patrons.

The Audience

Library users are:

- Readers
- Movie watchers
- Music lovers
- Students in high school and college
- Parents
- Job hunters
- Professionals, entrepreneurs
- Adult learners
- English learners
- Disabled
- Elderly
- Community Seekers

How do you personalize the customer experience when your audience is so diverse? The library endeavors to be all things to all people, but marketing, by its very nature, cannot be everything to everyone. Messages must be targeted to their audience, and targeting means going deeper, not wider.

For example, a 2016A recent Pew Research Center report found that 74% of adults fall into the category of “personal learners” and use the library to access how-to resources and workshops to learn more about their hobbies and personal interests (Rainie).

Professionals and entrepreneurs who use the library to upgrade their skills or prepare for a new job comprise 63% of full time or part time workers, which amounts to almost 36% of the entire U. S. adult population (Rainie).

A new analysis of Pew Research Center survey data from fall 2016 finds that 53% of Millennials (those ages 18 to 35 at the time) say they used a library or bookmobile in the previous 12 months. That compares with 45% of Gen Xers, 43% of Baby Boomers and 36% of those in the Silent Generation. (Geiger)

The age range for Gen Xers is around 41-56 years of age, Baby Boomers are generally between 57-75, and the Silent Generation is now around 75-95 years old (Geiger).

Meeting the needs of diverse library users is where omnichannel marketing strategies and technology offer a better way. By asking patrons to complete a profile and interview, an algorithm can do the heavy lifting of personalizing content for users.

It is worth noting that libraries face stiff competition from the internet and streaming services. The library once addressed the issue of access and availability of resources, but today, anyone with a digital device and internet access can read, watch, and listen to books, movies, and music, and do research. This has empowered users and changed the relationship between providers and users. Libraries are now pivoting to a more market-oriented approach, and prioritizing user needs as well as their preferences to develop and adapt library collections, services, and programming (Hursh).

Omnichannel Marketing

There has been recent shift in marketing – from using objects like logos and taglines to differentiate one company from another, to building relationships through service, engagement, loyalty, and accountability. Customers today expect experiences, value, a personal connection, and feeling supported by the companies they do business with (Savadas).

The relationship between providers and customers has also become multidimensional, moving from a more transactional dynamic to one that is collaborative, reciprocal, and community oriented. These changes impact how libraries create collections, develop programs, use technology, and interact with users. Omnichannel marketing builds on these goals to

integrate all the touchpoints and personalize user interactions, whether they are face-to-face with staff or using an app.

What are some ways omnichannel marketing can benefit libraries and patrons?

Developing a library app that is fully functional instead of simply being a mobile-friendly version of the website is a good starting place. An app prioritizing personal information about the user based on the preferences in their profile can offer recommendations as the user moves through the library, or direct them to resources they need. It can provide a live ‘map’ of the library to not only help users quickly find what they want, but improve their knowledge of the library’s collections, equipment, and other resources. It can also connect them immediately to a staff member for additional help. QR codes posted throughout the library can offer more information about the library, its staff, and what the user will find in the section of the library they are in. Games could also be incorporated, such as a library scavenger hunt. Users can participate in reading goals and other challenges. Accessibility issues can also be addressed, and text to voice can be enabled so these users can also access information, and receive direction to large print materials and audiobooks.

Physical library cards can be offered in a small variety of designs that appeal to some of their diverse audiences. It’s a fun and unique way to say “thank you” to patrons who treasure their library cards and are loyal to the library. It may even encourage patrons to get excited about the library and use their library cards more often. Libraries that prioritize adapting to new users’ behaviors should consider adding an ecard option. This would allow library users to scan books for more information or check out as they go. More people are adopting the use of their smartphone as a digital wallet, and few leave home without it. This type of ecard is not to be confused with off campus ecards enabled for online access only.

Omnichannel marketing works to reduce friction and remove barriers, and acknowledges that a large part of the customer experience is communication. The library's website and social media integrations with the app, chat bots, live chat, video chat, and private messaging can connect all the communication touchpoints between library staff and patrons. Imagine how happy a library user would be to seamlessly move a support conversation from one channel to another.

Content marketing has been around for a while, but many libraries have not yet explored its full potential (Hursh). Some library blogs and newsletters are still just a list of events and promotions for library services. However, everyone loves a story, and library users in particular are hungry for stories about their library, the authors they follow, other library users, library supporters, and the list goes on. When people hear these stories, it builds community and makes users feel seen and supported. Providing valuable content also improves the library's credibility and user loyalty.

In a Pew Research presentation, Lee Rainie reveals, "The secret mission that people yearn to have libraries address:"

...many people struggle to find the most trustworthy information and they express a clear hope that librarians can help them. He explored recent research about how people are becoming "lifelong learners" and that library services are an element of how they hope to stay relevant in their jobs, as well as find ways to enrich their lives. (Rainie)

The library that takes this user need seriously will proactively seek to add value to all of the library's channels. Quality content is an opportunity to build trust, to grab the sustained

attention of users and offer added value, to be the expert people turn to when they have questions or are seeking inspiration.

Content marketing also brings attention to the library's collections and resources, including interlibrary loans, online courses, and academic databases. There are many library users who will seldom, if ever, physically walk into a library and see all the books and other resources on display (Hursh). Both digital and homebound users are excited to hear about the materials they can find online through the library's website, app, and third-party vendors.

Newsletters, or targeted emails, are a great way to make the library-user connection go a little deeper. Users who have completed a profile interview can be 'targeted' using their preferences, and many email marketing platforms offer options for creating personalized campaigns directly to the user's inbox. These personalizations could include such user preferences as:

- Printed materials
- Accessible materials such as large print or audiobooks
- Digital resources
- Nonfiction
- Movie and television watchers
- Music lovers
- Genre focus
- Parents

Embedded links take the user directly to the materials they would be interested in, and they can move quickly and conveniently to reserving materials or checking out electronic resources. Even the tone and language of targeted emails can make the experience warm and friendly for science fiction fans, music lovers, and history buffs. The better the library knows its users, the better they can serve their needs and interests.

The topic of how to use social media can be confusing, intimidating, and disconcerting. However, social media use is on the rise. A Pew Research survey revealed that 81% of adults say they use YouTube, and Facebook still dominates the social media landscape. Approximately 71% of social media users in the 18 to 30 age bracket say they use Instagram, and 65% use Snapchat. Social video platform TikTok continues to increase in popularity, coming in at around 30% for young users (Rainie).

This means libraries who want to connect with their patrons should consider which social media platforms give them the best return on investment. Although participation on these sites is free, there is still a significant time investment in social listening and creating posts and graphics, or filming and editing videos. The same principles of omnichannel marketing apply to social media, because it keeps the focus in developing deeper relationships with users. It's a quality over quantity emphasis so the library maintains and improves credibility.

Social media is great for personalization, as it allows a direct connection between the library, its users, and the community at large. Thematic posts consistent with currently published content can promote print materials, ebooks, audiobooks, accessible materials and technology, music, movies, genre, students, families, professionals, and the elderly. Users love themed book lists that help them find new and exciting books, and links that take users directly to materials that allow reservation or check out is another way for one action to flow into another, improving the user experience at every step.

Library budgets are also well served by omnichannel marketing. Measuring the return on investment becomes easier when user behavior can be assessed and evaluated. Privacy concerns are always an issue, and it's important to remember that marketing depends on user buy-in and their willingness to trade information for an improved, personalized experience. But by offering

personalized options for users, those who take advantage will give the library a clearer picture of the needs and interests of their community of users.

So how do patrons use the library? Angela Hursh at the Super Library Marketing blog encourages libraries to use marketing to bring the focus to the library's collections, and not just programming and streaming (Hursh). While many libraries believe their programming excites users and brings more people to the library, it is likely user data will show that more patrons are looking in the library and on the website for information about the library's collections. Since libraries invest much of their budget on collections, the library's marketing should bring attention to its best and most popular assets.

Conclusion

Libraries are deeply invested in serving their communities, and are constantly asking themselves, "How can we do this better?" Omnichannel marketing is one way libraries can send a clear message about their mission to provide equal access to information, connect users with the materials and resources they need, and personalize their experience whether they are face-to-face with staff or using an app.

A Tale of Four Patrons

To illustrate how omnichannel marketing could work for different patrons, I've created four different patrons. They use the library for different purposes, and the ways they access materials and services are varied. Let's explore how omnichannel marketing impacts their experience.

Scott

Scott, a busy, middle-aged professional, is recently divorced, and he wants to broaden his social horizons with other readers and pop culture fandoms. He figured the best place to start was his local library, where he occasionally goes to find the latest graphic novels and horror on the New Reads shelf. He visited the library website to find information about book clubs. Scott saw the library app featured on the home page and used the QR code to download it to his phone. An icon for the library's book clubs is featured on the app, and he was able to view the book clubs and the meeting schedule. The registration link is prominently featured, so he decided to fill out all the profile information to improve his recommendations. He enabled his location when using the app in the library, gave permission for the app to access his reading history, and enabled notifications. He enjoyed sharing information about his favorite genre fiction, and his love of comics and graphic novels, especially those that explore dark themes. This information, along with Scott's reading history, was used to suggest he join the Graphic Novel Reading Group, as well as the Shades and Shadows Club for readers who enjoy the horror genre. He registered for both groups and viewed the upcoming schedule, with links to the books and graphic novels that would be discussed in future months. He used those links to go directly to the books he was interested in, checked out two horror novels in ebook form, and reserved two graphic novels.

A few days later, he received an app notification on his phone that the graphic novels were available in the library, so he stopped by the library on his way home from work to pick them up. He wasn't sure where the reserve shelf was, but when Scott entered the library, a pop-up notification appeared that showed him a map of the library, and his path to the reserve shelf. He picked up his books and used the scanner in the app to check them out. Scott appreciated how quickly and easily he was able to find what he wanted, the convenience of the app on his phone,

and considering how preoccupied he gets when he's busy, Scott is glad he'll be able to set up reminders and notifications for the book clubs.

Mikayla

Mikayla is a student at Riverton High School. She is African-American and wants to make her mark in Hollywood as a screenwriter, film director, and producer. In her search on the library website for books that one of her teachers recommended about screenwriting and film studies, she saw the chat bot, and entered keywords to help her find out more about interlibrary loans for some hard-to-find resources. She was given some links, but she still had questions she felt would be better to ask a librarian directly. She clicked on the Live Chat button and was connected with Kate, a reference librarian, who was able to see Mikayla's previous interactions with the chat bot so Mikayla did not have to go into a long explanation of what she wanted. The librarian not only was able to quickly connect Mikayla with the books she needed through interlibrary loan portals OhioLink and WorldCat, she shared her screen to show Mikayla how to access these resources herself. Kate also told Mikayla about the library's film studies pathfinder, the library's audio/visual equipment available for check out, and the library's new Green Room, outfitted with audio/visual equipment and a green screen. On the shared screen, Kate was able to walk Mikayla through the reservation process for the audio/visual equipment and the Green Room. Kate encouraged Mikayla to download the app to her phone, where she could access her library account, receive notifications when reserved materials were available, see the Green Room schedule and reserve time quickly and conveniently. Mikayla's plans to make an impact in Hollywood as a black female director in the tradition of Julie Dash, Issa Rae, and Regina King are off to a good start with the resources at her library.

Agatha

Agatha embraces the fact that her mother named her after her favorite author, Agatha Christie. She features herself as a modern-day Miss Marple, but her low vision not only greatly impacts her ability to stop criminals in their tracks, but also her ability to read the books she loves. On one of her visits to the Large Print section of the library, a librarian named Millie asked her if she could be of assistance. Agatha wished out loud that she could be notified when new Large Print editions from her favorite mystery and suspense writers were available. Millie asked Agatha if she had access to a computer or other digital device. Agatha told her about her new iPad that was a gift from her grandchildren. Millie brought Agatha over to one of the library's computers and showed her how she could create her library profile and specifically request information about Large Print editions of mystery and suspense novels, as well as ebooks and audiobooks. Agatha was very excited and asked if she could come back with her iPad and have Millie help her get set up with a library profile, as well as register for OverDrive and Hoopla.

The very next day Agatha was back, armed with her iPad. Millie helped Agatha create her library profile. Agatha expressed her concern about privacy, but Millie assured her that the information she entered would not be shared or used for any reason other than for the specific purpose she was requesting. Millie asked Agatha if she wanted to receive a personalized library newsletter via email that would notify her of new arrivals in her favorite genre available in Large Print, ebook, or audiobook. Agatha enthusiastically signed up, and was pleased to see that the newsletter was geared for users with low vision. The print was large, with good contrast and plenty of white space. After creating accounts on OverDrive and Hoopla, Millie took Agatha through the process of reserving books she wanted and enabling notifications via email. Agatha

was pleased with all the accommodations that were available to her, and that she would have convenient access to her favorite reading.

Douglas

Douglas recently passed the Medical College Admissions Test and was accepted at his first choice for medical school. He did much of his research at his local library, using the library's research databases. He was feeling burned out from reading nothing but textbooks and research, so he's taking a break from studying this summer, and wants to indulge a little in his favorite comedic television shows, movies, and books. Doug is very familiar with the library website, but because he was so focused on his studies, he's not sure of what the library has to offer in his favorite genre. He checked his library account to make sure he returned all of the research materials he had checked out. Because he enabled recommendations based on reading history, when visits the home page, he saw a link to LOL Staff Picks, which led to a blog post with links to books, comics, and DVDs of television shows and movies, and fun descriptions written by the staff. Based on these descriptions he clicked on some of the links, and each link opened to the item's page, where he was able to immediately check them out or reserve them. Doug saw a prompt to sign up for the LOL Newsletter, the library profile survey, and the app. He completed the survey and was surprised that he was able to choose more specifically the kind of humor he enjoys. He chose Situational, Stand Up, and Screwball comedy, and was given a long list of recommendations of books, ebooks, DVDs and CDs, and streaming options through OverDrive and Hoopla. Doug decided to sign up for the newsletter, but not the app, since this break from reality is going to be a summer thing.

These stories about Scott, Mikayla, Agatha, and Doug (and don't ever call him Dougie) are just a glimpse of how a few touch points along the way can make the user's experience

simpler and more convenient. There are many other ways that omnichannel marketing can smooth the path from the library user to the materials, resources, and programs they need and want. As libraries consider how to serve their community in the information and technological age, omnichannel marketing will increasingly become part of the plan.

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- **SAMPLE OF
APP
BROCHURE**
- **LIBRARY APP
MOCKUP**
- **SAMPLE OF
LARGE PRINT
NEWSLETTER**

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LIBRARY GUIDE

When you are in the library, the app map will guide you to the materials you need.

ASK THE LIBRARIAN

Chat with a librarian at home or in the library from the app.

ACCESSIBILITY

Text-to-voice enables low vision users to find resources quicker and easier.



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All the information and resources of the Reverie Community Library can now be in the palm of your hand.

Use the power of the library to learn, grow, and make connections in your community!

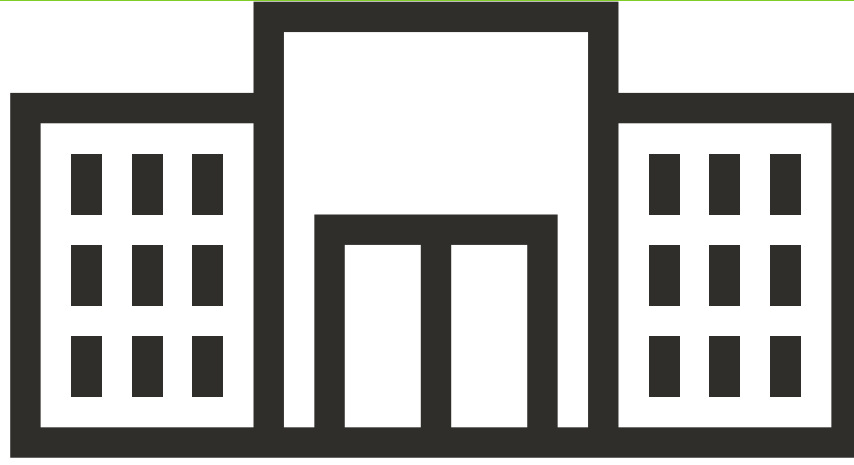
IT'S TIME FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

Users can opt-in on the app for a more personal library experience. With your permission, we'll help you keep track of your reading history and help you reach your goals!

Answer the interview questions about your interests, hobbies, favorite subjects, genres and subgenres, and more!

What kind of reading mood are you in? There's a recommendation for that!

PRIVACY NOTICE: Your privacy is important to us, and your information will not be shared for any reason.



Reverie Community Library



Profile



Account



Survey



Groups



Lists



Map

Newsletter Sign Up



SCAN



CATALOG



CARD

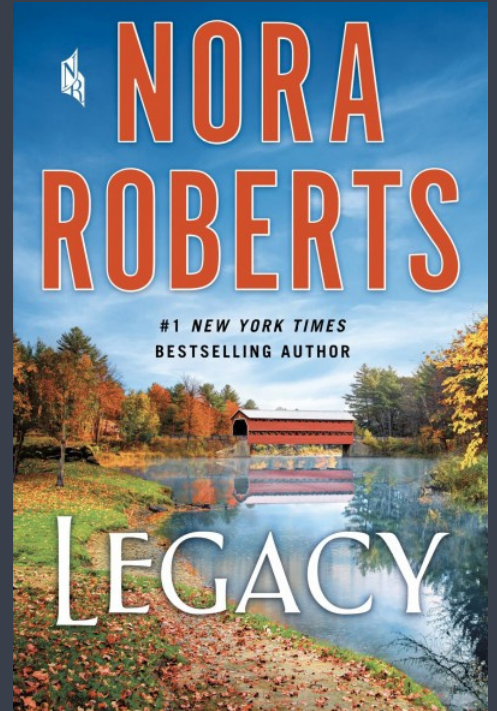
CHAT

New Releases

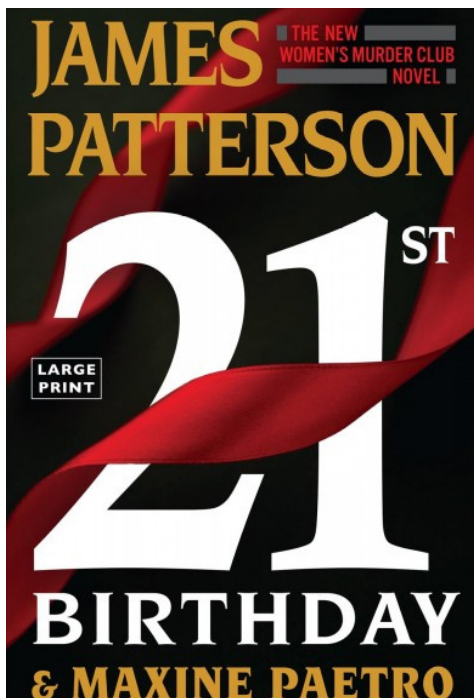
THE LATEST LARGE PRINT EDITIONS

Legacy by Nora Roberts

Yoga and fitness guru Adrian Rizzo goes home to Maryland after she begins receiving death threats, and meets up with her childhood crush to discover the truth.



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21st Birthday

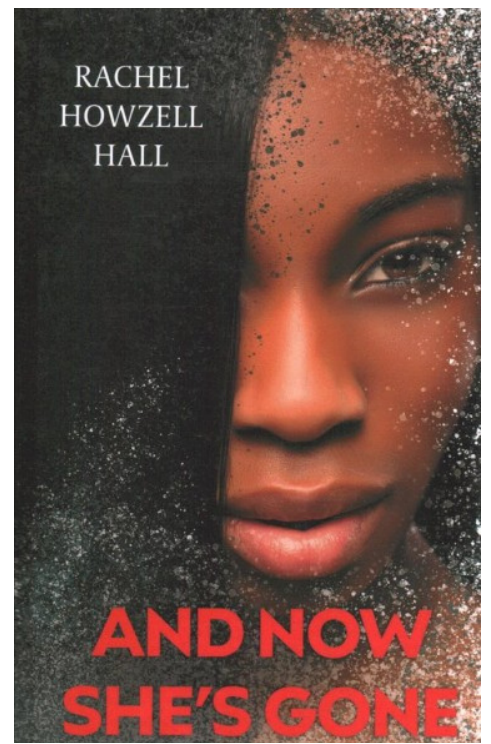
by James Patterson

The latest in the Detective Lindsay Boxer series sees Lindsay trying to protect a young woman from a serial killer so she can see her 21st birthday.

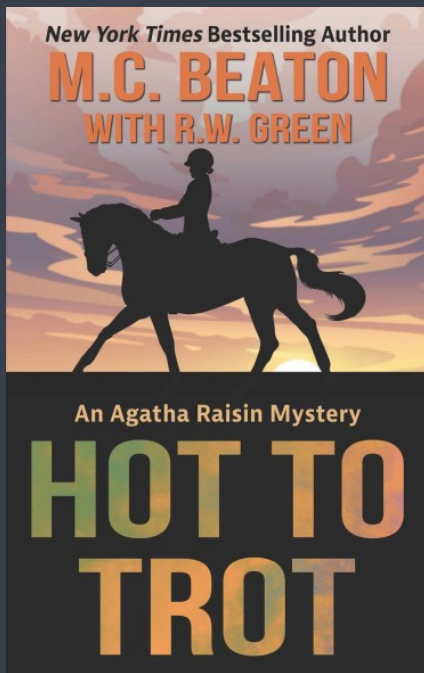
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