

Promoting Library Services at Fintel Library (Roanoke College)

by Hany Hosny, Patricia Jean Powell, and Rebecca Heller

The renowned American Civil War historian and novelist Shelby Foote once said, “A university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library.” While Foote’s opinion is sure to be met with agreement and high-fives throughout the world of academic librarians, its validation can only come through the use of libraries by campus communities. Without use, college libraries are of no benefit to anyone.

Roanoke College’s Fintel Library considers promotion of the library to be an ongoing objective, not only because of the manner in which libraries’ resources and offerings evolve, but also because of the parallel evolution in faculty and students’ information needs. And that’s to say nothing of the four-year cycle during which student bodies are almost entirely recycled.

The objective of promoting the library, especially to students who might be intimidated or unfamiliar with the library’s offerings, needs to be ongoing. But how do you promote a service to someone who doesn’t come by to see what you have to offer?

Easy. Do what the corporate world does! Create a brand, advertise, and place your promotion tools in areas where your target audience is likely to be found. Then be ready to absorb the traffic and the increase in service requests that your success might create.

After considering the importance of a brand, Fintel Library

created a logo and an accompanying slogan to be used on all promotional materials. These materials have included posters, bookmarks, newsletters, giveaways, a white board, etc. What follows is a brief summary of how each of these things is used to promote the campus library.

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Giveaways

Everyone appreciates free stuff—especially if it is relevant to campus life. We’ve given away items such as breath mints, coffee mugs, and tri-colored highlighters to visitors who check out three or more items at our lending services desk. Ideally, the giveaway should be something that is used over and over in the presence of others who might be interested in getting their own free giveaways.

Newsletters

During the fall and spring semesters, the library puts out regular newsletters, promoting its services and attempting to project a laid-back, yet informative style of communication that will interest students. These newsletters are displayed on all floors of campus residence halls, sent to each and

every faculty member in academic departments, and distributed at the lending services desk to anyone who checks out items or requests a newsletter. Features include new acquisitions, articles about the various electronic databases to which the library subscribes, library hours, employment opportunities, and general information about the library’s offerings.

Posters

The library displays posters in various places on campus. The material they’re printed on, whether or not they’re framed, the dimensions at which they’re printed, and the locations in which they are displayed all depend on the specific nature of the posters.

By way of example, there are two posters displayed in this article. The “More time to play” poster

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marks inside each one bearing the slogan "Check me out." During a week when there are no lectures scheduled, we pick a topic of current or local interest. This academic year, during the week leading up to a lunar eclipse, we displayed our most recent astronomy book purchases alongside an article clipped from our local newspaper outlining the best time and spot to view the lunar display in Roanoke.

We just started keeping some statistics during March/April 2008 to see how many items are checked out from the special display table. When a library patron brings a book from the display to the circulation counter for checkout, the circulation attendant simply places the "Check me out" bookmark into a cardboard box. When the librarian takes down the current display, she collects any bookmarks in the box and tallies them up. We had ten displays during those months, featuring sixty-two books, two e-book printouts, seven DVDs, and one journal issue (the whole issue was devoted to the special topic). Six books and one DVD from the display were checked out. Anecdotally, several patrons stopped to look at the displays and thumb through the books; I often had to rearrange the items so that they were once again opened to the page that I wanted to feature for the display. In addition, one professor emailed to thank us and raved about the large crowd that had attended the lecture that we "advertised" with our special library display.

Book Signing Event

The history department on campus hosted a book-signing reception for one of the history professors,

and a colleague and I attended. We enjoyed it so much that we wanted to host a similar event in the library for all faculty who had published books. This quickly expanded to include our Kandinsky Trio and

More time to play.

It pays to know your way around Fintel Library.

- books * DVDs * journals * research assistance * media lab * interlibrary loans * peer tutoring * archives * government documents * Shelflife * class instruction * electronic journal articles * wide screen TV * snack machines * Cafe Fintel * group study rooms * DVD/VHS players * PC lab * wireless network connection * comfy furniture * off campus access to electronic resources * course reserves * room reservations * same-day access to Hollins University library materials * guest speaker events * workshops on electronic resources * 24-hour access during final exams * fax machine * friendly, helpful library staff *

FINTEL LIBRARY

you get there.

Get out from behind the 8-ball.

Make a research assistance appointment at Fintel Library today.
www.roanoke.edu/researchappointment

FINTEL LIBRARY

Roanoke College Choir, both of whom have published CDs of their music. Planning began several months in advance of the date.

Family Weekend is held in the fall each year about five weeks into the semester. This seemed to be an ideal time to host the event, as more people would be on campus and we could piggyback on their publicity for the weekend. There are many activities scheduled beginning Friday evening and ending on Sunday. The event was scheduled for Friday afternoon from three to five p.m. on Family Weekend. We had a steady stream of people, including parents, students, and some staff.

Our event was included in the publicity for Family Weekend that was mailed to all parents/families of our students. The Resource Development Office, which coordinated Family Weekend, made a sign to place outside the front of the library. They also made nametags for the faculty. An ad announcing the event appeared in the *Roanoke Times* newspaper.

