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Garfield County Public Library District: *Marketing and Communications Plan Executive Summary*



**Executive summary of report to the Garfield County Public Library District
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November 2014**

Introduction

Garfield County Public Library District (GCPLD) has been providing services to the residents of Garfield County since the first library opened over 75 years ago. GCPLD has a strong foundation and a long legacy of providing access to knowledge, resources and services. GCPLD believes that its next great challenge lies in creating an organization that understands the needs of our communities and ensures that the libraries are both a reflection of these communities and a window to the world beyond. As a fundamental educational service supported by tax dollars, GCPLD believes that everyone should be aware of what the library can do.

GCPLD determined that a comprehensive marketing review was needed to better understand the public's perceptions of the libraries and how they learned about various library programs and services. Additionally, GCPLD recognized that new strategic vision, mission and values statements were necessary to provide organizational alignment and clarity for staff, volunteers and the public about who the libraries are and what they offer. Of primary concern was reaching out to underserved and unserved portions of our communities. GCPLD knew that in order to reach the majority of residents in the county, it was important to increase the visibility of library services in each of the six library communities and throughout the region.

Methods

To accomplish these goals, JVA Consulting, LLC (JVA) was hired to conduct community research, including:

- Administering an online survey in English and Spanish (completed by 1,258 people)
- Reviewing demographic data on Garfield County residents collected from an Esri (2010) profile
- Facilitating a series of six 90-minute public meetings—one at each GCPLD library—that engaged over 200 community members in (a) envisioning how the libraries could better meet community members' needs related to six usage areas, (b) honing in on top strategies, and (c) discussing current and future marketing and communications
- Analyzing existing internal products and procedures to look for improvements and economies

GCPLD's Strategic Elements

As part of this process, JVA facilitated a strategic alignment process with GCPLD staff. This resulted in GCPLD revamping its mission and creating new vision and value statements:

GCPLD's Mission: To connect our communities to a world of possibilities.

GCPLD's Vision: To be a trusted and valued resource to everyone in our communities.

GCPLD's Five Core Values

Balance: We ensure our libraries reflect our diverse communities and the world beyond.

Community: We foster connections and return value on our community's investment in us.

Empowerment: We're here to help by providing tools and assistance for education and exploration.

Excellence: We provide exceptional staff, materials, services and facilities.

Innovation: We encourage new ideas and the understanding of technology.

JVA recommends GCPLD adopt a brand concept:

- GCPLD is a trusted partner and valued resource in Garfield County.
- GCPLD is community focused, providing a solid return on investment and providing all community members with the tools and resources they need to reach their goals.
- GCPLD maintains high-quality facilities, materials and programs, and provides the community with access to leading-edge technology.

JVA recommends GCPLD adopts the tag line: *Find Your Story*

JVA believes that GCPLD offers something for everyone and using the *Find Your Story* theme in promotional materials embodies this concept. GCPLD should expand this concept into a campaign to promote library services.

Identifying Target Markets

To better understand how to tailor messaging to different populations, JVA examined the population segments contained within GCPLD's service area of Garfield County. An analysis of the Esri Demographic Profile and data collected from the community outreach identified the following seven target population markets:

Teens and pre-teens ages 11–17

New adults ages 18–25

Young families ages 25–40, with children under the age of 10

Younger adults ages 30 to 40

Middle-age adults ages 40 to 50

Working older adults ages 50 and older

Spanish-speaking adults and their families

The full report describes data on each population and provides suggestions for reaching each population through targeted marketing and population-specific library programming and events.

Marketing Recommendations

JVA's recommendations are divided into five sections in alignment with GCPLD's marketing goals. Collectively, the five sections contain 15 recommendations for GCPLD's efforts including marketing and communication, programming, outreach, and customer service training. These recommendations are included in full, along with a description of all data collected, in the full report, available online at www.gcpld.org.

Goal 1: Make getting a library card easier and increase the frequency of visits to the library by cardholders.

GCPLD's target audience should include all residents of Garfield County, especially those who do not have or use a library card. GCPLD currently has approximately 45,000 library cardholders (in a current population of 57,302), but in the past six months, only 19,000 of those cards were used to check out library books. GCPLD should aspire to get existing cardholders to use the library more often, and to better engage non-users by effectively demonstrating the value of public libraries and all that it has to offer.

Recommendation 1: Increase Library Membership and Usage. In order to increase GCPLD membership and use, JVA suggests easing the requirements to obtain a library card and creating a *Find Your Story* campaign to engage potential library cardholders. JVA also recommends reengaging existing library users through better communication of library services.

Goal 2: Make the libraries more inviting to individuals who need assistance by improving accessibility.

JVA identified several underserved populations in Garfield County that do not currently take full advantage of library programs and services because of barriers to access. Those barriers might include the inability to speak English, read without assistance or get to the library.

Recommendation 2: Engage Spanish-Speaking Adults. JVA recommends that GCPLD take actions to better engage Spanish-speaking adults in library programs. There are a number of reasons why this is difficult, including language and literacy struggles, issues of mistrust of government agencies and broad diversity within the Spanish-speaking community (e.g., background, culture, education, work experience, language fluency). While GCPLD has Spanish-language materials in every branch and a strong Spanish language option on its website, it lacks adequate Spanish-speaking staff and Spanish-language programming to attract a significant segment of that population. JVA suggests that GCPLD works on improving its communication with the Latino community and develop targeted programs and services for this population.

Recommendation 3: Engage Individuals with Disabilities. GCPLD should make every effort to reach out to groups in the community that serve individuals with disabilities to determine their needs before implementing solutions. These target audiences can better inform the library of accessibility needs and may be helpful in locating resources to support the effort. JVA suggests providing assistive devices and training staff on their use to better support users with disabilities.

Recommendation 4: Expand Homebound Services. In order to better serve people who have difficulties getting to the library on their own, GCPLD can better promote existing homebound services, alternative transportation resources, and partnerships with local agencies to serve people with limited mobility.

Goal 3. Improve library programs to better meet community needs and increase opportunities for community members to share their knowledge and skills.

JVA encourages GCPLD to “connect” to the libraries’ communities through direct engagement. Every community has individuals with diverse talents, interests and passions that can be shared with others. By offering an outlet for citizens’ creativity, the libraries can serve as a center for sharing these community assets.

Recommendation 5: Engage Community Members in Creating and Presenting Library Programs. It is critical for GCPLD to engage community members as resources to help create programming at the libraries. Involving local community members in creating, planning and evaluating library programs can ensure that community needs are being addressed. This programming should also be aligned with GCPLD’s goals. JVA recommends that GCPLD recruits locals for all kinds of programs that address community needs and interests.

Recommendation 6: Enrich Library Users' Experiences Through Targeted Programming. To help ensure success, GCPLD should develop standard protocols that cover the basic procedures for program planning and execution as a guide for branch staff. JVA recommends reducing the overall amount of programs and ensuring that all programming is of high quality and in alignment with GCPLD's mission, vision and values. To accomplish this, JVA developed a five-tier program marketing protocol, production and design (P&D) process, and strategy screen. These processes will assist GCPLD in its efforts to focus its marketing efforts on programs that have the best potential to attract a diverse audience, showcase the library's materials and services, and/or respond to a need of the local community.

Goal 4: Improve our methods of communication to our communities to keep them informed of everything the library has to offer and help them discover what's new.

Through the community data collection, JVA discovered that community members were overwhelmingly unaware of the libraries' diverse offerings. To truly inform these community members and be responsive to current technology, communication must improve. To accomplish this, JVA recommends that GCPLD reduce existing marketing "noise" to better convey their message to all community members.

Recommendation 7: Ensure Quality of Printed Marketing Materials. Ensure all of GCPLD's printed marketing materials reflect the high quality standards desired. JVA recommends reducing the total amount of printed materials, creating reusable marketing materials, and reducing clutter at library desks.

Recommendation 8: Improve Information Quality on GCPLD Program Calendars. Improve the information quality of GCPLD's program calendars. JVA recommends that GCPLD change the printed calendar to a two-sided format that highlights featured events and provides more description on upcoming programs.

Recommendation 9: Develop a Menu of Services. While it is clear that most people visit the library to borrow books, the survey data showed that many people never use or are not aware of the existence of some library services, such as e-books or individualized technology instruction. Ensure that all current and future library users are well informed of library offerings, and the services offered at each library branch are represented in a "menu of services" containing all the ways users can access library resources.

Recommendation 10: Ensure That GCPLD Uses Promotional Materials Effectively. Promotional signage is an important marketing tool. JVA recommends creating effective external (e.g., weatherproof outdoor signs, chalkboards, sandwich boards, banners) and internal (e.g., posters, flyers) signage to help build better community awareness of programs.

Recommendation 11: Continue to Foster Beneficial Relationships with Local Media. To better market the libraries, JVA recommends building partnerships with local newspaper and radio stations, utilizing filler space, offering partnership opportunities, and communicating regularly with the press. GCPLD already has longstanding and fruitful relationships with local media, and strengthening and improving these relationships could be beneficial to GCPLD's communication efforts.

Recommendation 12: Optimize Digital Content. Utilizing digital media is one of the most cost-effective ways to build awareness of GCPLD programming. The current website (www.gcpld.org) offers library users a sleek and highly visual portal into the Garfield County Libraries' catalog, policies, programs and services. To improve

the web presence of GCPLD and the branches, JVA recommends using sans-serif font, increasing the visibility of online registration for library cards, providing adequate descriptive content to engage users about upcoming programs and events, and highlighting branch-specific programs.

Recommendation 13: Improve and Increase Libraries' Social Media Presence. Social media is an important tool to connect with community members, and can expand GCPLD's marketing reach and solicit feedback from library users. JVA recommends that GCPLD consider Facebook to be the primary tool for social media marketing. Twitter and Instagram should be considered complimentary strategies, and Pinterest should be explored.

Recommendation 14: Improve Newsletter Content and Timeliness. To improve information quality and timeliness, JVA recommends that GCPLD discontinue the quarterly printed newsletter and instead infuse quarterly content into monthly branch-specific e-newsletters.

Goal 5: Ensure all marketing efforts are aligned with GCPLD's mission, vision and values, and that all staff are informed and prepared to promote the library's services, materials and programs.

GCPLD should ensure that all policies, actions and goals embody their organizational values, vision and mission. The staff and public should be aware of goals and objectives through clear and succinct branding and messaging. Staff should be able to provide accurate information on all programs, initiatives and services. Board members and volunteers should have a clear sense of GCPLD's mission, vision and values and be able to articulate these elements to others. Elected Officials, Local Businesses, community partners and the general public should have a strong sense of what the libraries offer and represent to the community.

Recommendation 15: Utilize Library Staff to Enhance Customer Service and Communication. All library staff should be informed and prepared to promote the library's services, materials and programs, and to serve as human resources for library users that are seeking information on these things. JVA suggests empowering staff members to be library ambassadors through regular trainings in customer service best practices, by engaging staff in active community building with library users, and utilizing word-of-mouth communication as a key marketing tool. Enhancing communication and customer service will both ensure that library users are aware of existing library resources and enhance users' library experience.

Messaging, Budget, and Review of Success

Messaging. The full report (accessible at www.gcpld.org) provides suggestions for messaging themes, brand statements and messaging content suggested for use in marketing materials.

Marketing Budget. JVA has made recommendations for GCPLD's 2015 marketing budget, including: marketing in English-language and Spanish-language media; printing brochures, magnets and posters; purchasing paid social media advertisements; and addressing other marketing needs.

Review of Success and Ongoing Goals. JVA recommends that GCPLD conduct ongoing monitoring and analysis of its success with each of the marketing goals described in this plan, and provided recommendations to allow for GCPLD to track its progress.

Conclusion

The surveys and community meetings reflect that GCPLD is in the enviable position of having enthusiastic community support, outstanding new and innovative facilities, and great board members, staff, volunteers and community support. The challenge ahead lies in how to communicate more effectively in order to promote library membership, programs and services, community engagement, customer service, and user satisfaction to ever-higher levels.

