



Wegeekideas

The Geek the Library pilot campaign learnings were not limited to the results of the quantitative tracking study. Enthusiastic pilot library leaders and staff provided rich insights and helpful examples about the experience of implementing the campaign in their local communities.

It was the steadfast commitment of these passionate participants that drove overall campaign impact. We are extremely proud and appreciative of their efforts and the local results. This chapter showcases many of the strategies and tactics used by pilot libraries—including public relations and media outreach, advertising, community events and social media.

Passionate librarians make the difference

Geek the Library made an impact in pilot communities, but the pre- and post-campaign surveys tell only part of the story. The dedication and persistent efforts of library participants heavily influenced the positive changes in key public perceptions and behaviors relating to the library, librarians and public library support.



Pilot library activities were measured and evaluated in a number of ways, including tracking of Web site hits and other online activities, local community event attendance, article placements in newspapers and other media, and direct information from participating libraries. These ongoing measures provided additional insights about the effectiveness of specific campaign activities, and the importance of the local library's role in making the Geek the Library campaign a success.

Dedicated staff and supportive library leaders were the driving force for the overall effectiveness of each local campaign. The pilot experience confirmed that success with Geek the Library depends on not one or two specific promotional elements, but the effective implementation of all facets of the campaign: advertising and public relations, community events and grassroots programs, Web sites and social networking.



It's important to note that the second group of pilot libraries, added after the initial launch in June 2009, did not have the same robust advertising strategy or financial support as the initial libraries in central Iowa and southern Georgia. As a result, these libraries spent significant time planning their launch approaches and overall strategies, and relied heavily on community events, grassroots efforts and public relations initiatives. Less advertising dollars inspired creativity and resourcefulness. We also found that having direct control of the amount and placement of advertising helped these libraries successfully tailor the campaign to each unique community.



Advertising

Geek the Library advertising initiates interest, and presents the library as relevant and vital.

Advertising efforts in the pilot communities were an important success factor for educating community members and thereby raising awareness. (The initial group of pilot libraries in southern Georgia and central Iowa received full support from OCLC with advertising strategy and implementation.)

The results of the pre- and post-campaign surveys measured awareness at the beginning and end of the pilot, but the pilot libraries knew that advertising efforts were having an impact early on, as members of the public came into the library to ask about the campaign. Billboards and other signage acted as a catalyst for these conversations. Billboards were placed in high-traffic areas and the visual impact drew attention. The results of the campaign tracking study indicated that the billboards were the most visible aspect of the advertising program (nearly 70 percent of people who saw the campaign in each market reported seeing the billboards) and they acted as a teaser for the public, who needed to see other aspects of the campaign to find out more.

Public relations and media outreach

Geek the Library provides new opportunities to build or strengthen relationships with local media.

Existing relationships between pilot libraries and local media channels were key to making the pilot campaign launch a success. Many of the media outlets that ran Geek the Library advertising also offered value-add opportunities as part of the advertising buy, such as interviews and campaign coverage. Articles in the local newspapers and interviews with local television and radio were important complements to advertising in helping to reach a large percentage of the pilot communities at campaign launch and beyond.

Local libraries helped compile lists of important local media contacts and worked with the Geek the Library team to distribute campaign press materials. Local media were invited to attend launch events, and the team provided Geek the Library goody bags filled with giveaways and high-level information about the campaign and its educational purpose.

Following the initial launch, participating libraries and the Geek the Library team found several ways to keep the campaign and the story behind the campaign in the media. Successful strategies included letters to the editor from library supporters, including Friends of the Library and library board members, and introducing the media to local transformational library stories. The Geek the Library campaign pilot achieved nearly 300 placements in total across all markets, including major newspapers, major network TV affiliates, print, radio and online media (blogs).

Bright ideas and best practices



Des Moines Public Library and Ames Public Library in central Iowa were active in supporting the pilot launch, with a total of 14 interviews with local media during launch week alone. **Des Moines Public Library** coordinated an interview about the campaign with the mayor of Des Moines, Frank Cownie, for the Mayor's Spotlight on the city's local cable access channel, DMTV.



Hog Hammock Public Library, part of Three Rivers Library System in southern Georgia, consistently utilized local newspaper announcements to promote library events, and the branch manager wrote a letter to the editor sharing the key elements of the awareness campaign.



Live Oak Public Libraries launched the southern Georgia pilot in Savannah with an outdoor event in Johnson Square. The launch team, including the Live Oak marketing staff, promoted the event in local newspaper listings and through Live Oak's established communication channels. The location and timing of the event, in an area of Savannah that many residents walk through during the day, ensured that the

campaign launch had impact. Over 700 people attended the event, which lasted from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The launch was covered by key television, radio and print outlets, with a total of 29 interviews and articles, in addition to blog and Twitter posts.



Richmond Hill Public Library in southern Georgia was a library that had not previously worked much with local media. Its staff supplied Geek the Library educational materials to *Richmond Hill Reflections* magazine. The resulting article educated readers about the significant role their library plays in their community and the funding challenges faced by the library.



As part of community-based educational efforts, **Story County, Iowa** library leaders presented a Geek the Library t-shirt to Iowa Governor Chet Culver, accompanied him on his Iowa Unlimited Whistle Stop Train Tour, and talked to him about the value of public libraries and library funding. The press took photos and covered the story.

Community events

Geek the Library is an effective vehicle for getting out into the community, and attending new and diverse local events.

Community events provided a fun and easy way for the pilot library staff to engage with members of their individual communities. There were many local opportunities and the Geek the Library theme was easily tailored to fit specific festivals and activities. The visual impact of campaign banners and table skirts helped draw attention, and the public lined up to pick up posters, stickers, bookmarks and bags.

The biggest attraction at many events was what became known as the geek wall—a large, free-standing wall that people could write on to share what they geek. At some events, local photographers took people’s photos with the wall and photos were posted on the campaign Flickr group page. People signed a release to permit their photos to be posted.

At smaller events, libraries found an inexpensive and more mobile solution to the geek wall with black foam core panels, a ‘What do you geek?’ bumper sticker, portable easels and silver markers. Event attendees were just as eager to share what they geek and the panels were then placed on display at the library. Library staff and volunteers enjoyed the opportunity to engage with the public, and found that it was easy to talk about the campaign and its purpose—to educate and raise awareness of the valuable services provided by libraries and the need for library funding.

Several pilot libraries also held events at the library, and used the campaign materials and theme to promote attendance. In some cases, these were library events that were already on the library calendar, and in other cases they were created specifically as part of the library’s Geek the Library marketing plan.

Bright ideas and best practices



Bertha Bartlett Public Library in central Iowa participated in the Story City storytelling festival, a three-day event that features stories told by a variety of people around the city of Story City. The Geek the Library kiosk was a stop on the tour, and the library printed custom t-shirts that said, “I geek storytelling.”



Bondurant Public Library in central Iowa entered a float featuring a large campaign banner in the annual Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino Parade and won second prize. The title was “Fables and Stables” and featured classic literary characters.



Okefenokee Regional Library System in Georgia organized walk-arounds at community events and parades to distribute Geek the Library goody bags and discuss public library funding.



Piedmont Regional Library System in Georgia participated in the systemwide Geek the Library week with a variety of activities. Campaign materials were distributed throughout the community. All 11 branches took part. Other pilot libraries hosted their own Geek the Library week, some with mayoral proclamations.



Shelbyville-Shelby County Public Library in Indiana launched its Geek the Library campaign at a local high school football game. Director Janet Wallace made sure she got the attention of the media and the public by wearing a mobile geek wall as a sandwich board.



Wayne County Library, part of Three Rivers Regional Library System in Georgia, took part in job fairs promoting Geek the Library. The library used these events to remind attendees of the resources available to help support online job searches, applications and resumé writing.



Zion-Benton Public Library in Illinois invited a variety of community leaders to the library and worked with a local photographer to create custom posters. The local 'movers and shakers' were invited to a follow-up breakfast where they learned about the campaign and received multiple copies of their posters to distribute in the community.

Web site, online tools and social media

Geek the Library encourages your community to engage online.

The campaign Web site, geekthelibrary.org, provides opportunities for visitors to find out more about the campaign, download educational materials, watch videos, and learn about local library funding and how they can lend support. The Web site also incorporates a simple poll and the ability to sign up for e-mail messages.

One of the most popular areas of the Web site is the ‘Get Your Geek On’ section (geekthelibrary.org/getyourgeekon), where library staff and supporters can share what they geek and how the library supports them. Over the course of the pilot, hundreds of people shared what they geek, with passions ranging from guitars to baking. All the geeks are combined to form a virtual geek wall.

caitlingeekshistory

I’ve always been in love with history. I’m good at it, I find it fun and it makes sense to me. I’ve always agreed with Winston Churchill that we need to study history or it’ll repeat. And, I just found out I may be eligible for an out-of-state history scholarship, while still in the 9th grade. To a college I want to go to. Life is stellar. Totally stellar.

davegeeksmusic

Whether I’m looking for some obscure song done by a ‘one-hit wonder’ from my high school days, the greatest hits of a favorite band or just trying to find something new, the library is the place to explore for music of all genres! Oh, and I can find weird sound effects and the perfect music for a romantic Italian dinner with my wife. That’s amore!

laurageekslibraries

Out of all the things I considered geeking (Harry Potter, knitting, The Beatles, etc.), I chose what may seem like an easy out ... libraries. However, libraries are my passion and will eventually be my career. I’m starting my journey towards my MLIS this week and could not be more proud to be a part of this amazing community. Who else fights for literacy, intellectual freedom and the accessibility for information more than a librarian? Therefore, I geek libraries.

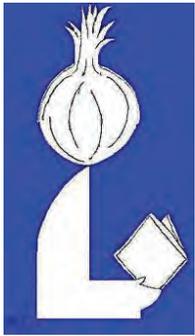
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I dropped out of high school when I was 14 years old, and never learned math. While I always had an interest in computing and electronics, my lack of formal education kept me from seriously pursuing those studies. With help from my local library and the many resources available there, I began to read and learn about computer science and mathematics. Ten years later, I’m shopping for Ph.D. programs in computer engineering!

The Geek the Library social media sites provide additional opportunities for people to engage, learn and share. Facebook, in particular, took the campaign message far beyond the pilot communities, and continues to help carry and expand the conversation about the value of the library and the need for support.

Many participating libraries used their Web sites and other social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, to promote the campaign and link to geekthelibrary.org.

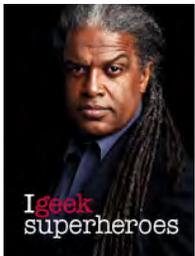
Bright ideas and best practices



Many participants used Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and the help of local bloggers to update their communities about Geek the Library and to start a local public library funding conversation. **Ohoopee Regional Library System**, headquartered in Vidalia, Georgia, for example, recognized this vital communication avenue and posted regular Facebook status updates for the system's growing fan base—including many promoting Geek the Library during the pilot campaign. These activities helped spread the message beyond patrons.



Shelbyville-Shelby County Public Library in Shelbyville, Indiana, took photos of staff—much like those from Geek the Library—and asked them what they geeked. The photos, along with their names, departments and number of years they've been with the library, were prominently featured on the library's homepage. The information was updated regularly, highlighting different staff members every week during the pilot campaign.



Participants utilized their library Web sites to promote Geek the Library in many different ways, but most often they used online banners featuring Geek the Library images and/or messages. Consistent use of these standard banners helped drive community traffic to geekthelibrary.org, and encouraged further interest in Geek the Library and public library funding. A banner added by **Live Oak Public Libraries** was a top referring Web site back to geekthelibrary.org during the pilot campaign.

Over 13,000 fans were added to the official Geek the Library Facebook page during the pilot campaign, putting it in the top four percent of similar Facebook pages. Activity and fan discussion on Facebook surpassed expectations (with an average of 20 to 40 responses per post) and provided valuable data about the direction of public funding conversation and the viral nature of the Geek the Library campaign.

The Geek the Library photo stream was used as an 'eye on the campaign' with regular updates. Likewise, the Geek the Library group page had over 80 members by the end of the pilot campaign, with nearly 1,000 total images.

Over 800 people were following the campaign on Twitter by the end of the campaign pilot. Retweeting of campaign tweets and Geek the Library mentions were consistent and passionate, and helped the message spread outside of the pilot markets.

Connecting with the community

Geek the Library allows libraries to connect with the community in new and effective ways. Grassroots programs and tools helped ensure that all residents understood the campaign. These efforts also encouraged residents to spread the campaign messages among friends and family, and the rest of the community. When residents embraced Geek the Library, as they did in some of the pilot communities, the campaign took on a life of its own, which improved the overall impact. Many pilot libraries saw greater awareness when messages were being reinforced organically within the community and the message wasn't coming only from the library.



The primary purpose of the campaign posters was to take the message out to local businesses, restaurants and retailers, as well as to community organizations and schools, by asking them to display the posters in their windows or on their bulletin boards. This put the campaign in places that could reach potential supporters who may not be regular library users, while providing an opportunity for the library to build relationships with key community players. Posters were also a draw for local teachers, many of whom used them in their classrooms and built assignments around what the students geek. These efforts helped reinforce the community aspect of the campaign.

The pilot campaign included a number of tools for libraries to localize the messages. Poster templates, for example, were provided for pilot libraries to use with images of local people. Some libraries displayed the posters of local residents in the library, and found they would bring friends and relatives into the library to see them, providing an opportunity for dialogue.



Many participants used the Geek the Library postcards to help gain interest for the campaign. For example, to get the attention of influential members of the community, including elected officials, some libraries added preprinted educational messages and distributed them at events. Others used the postcards as invitations to events and as thank-you cards to top-tier supporters. The campaign also included several presentations and materials for libraries to use for sharing the campaign with local organizations, such as local chambers of commerce and Kiwanis chapters. Libraries found it effective to engage these groups as part of the launch and often combined the presentation with campaign giveaways.

Some of the most creative examples were libraries that integrated the campaign with existing community outreach programs.

Bright ideas and best practices



Appling County Public Library, part of Okefenokee Regional Library System in Georgia, worked with new mom programs at area hospitals. It provided Geek the Library goody bags and library materials, along with crocheted caps for the babies. Moms were reminded about the value of the library for the community and the great resources available.



Many pilot libraries partnered with local businesses, and asked them to distribute Geek the Library posters and other materials. But some businesses took the initiative on their own. A local retail establishment in Des Moines displayed a 'We Geek Warm Coats' sign. The staff from **Des Moines Public Library** followed up and asked them to give Geek the Library handouts to their customers.



Hog Hammock Public Library in southern Georgia is a small heritage library based on Sapelo Island off the Georgia coast and can be reached only by ferry. The manager featured posters around the community including on the Sapelo Island Ferry, multiple grocery stores and the Georgia State University branch located on the island.



Kirkendall Public Library in Iowa was the first library to design and print custom Geek the Library posters featuring local people, including local celebrities. Nearly 30 posters were customized and printed for display, and then published online. The library also implemented a 'Geek of the Week' competition where the winning photo was displayed online every week.



Vidalia-Toombs County Library, part of Ohoopsee Regional Library System in Georgia, leveraged its teen advisory board to implement and integrate the campaign. While teens were not a target audience, these young adults helped staff events and develop original campaign ideas—especially for the library Web site and social networking sites.

Connecting back to the library and to library funding

Geek the Library gets people talking and is a springboard for important local funding conversations.

The campaign design focuses heavily on community advocacy, and dissemination of educational material and marketing activities that reach potential supporters. But it is also important to make the connection from the campaign to the local library.

The pilot campaign included outdoor hanging banners that libraries could display on their buildings, depending on zoning laws, turning the library itself into a billboard for the campaign. Many libraries created displays that connected their materials and programs to the specific geeks featured in the campaign. Others found it easy to promote their programming by connecting the programs to the Geek the Library theme. Many pilot library leaders also leveraged the awareness developed by campaign activities by sharing the value of the library with local funding decision-making bodies.

Bright ideas and best practices



Ames Public Library in Iowa used the campaign as a launching pad to discuss the important need for continued funding with the Ames City Council. Director Art Weeks shared an educational PowerPoint presentation that explained the value the library provides to the community using the Geek the Library theme.



Richmond Hill Public Library in Georgia and many other pilot libraries created their own screensavers for library computers. Some used various static screensavers available on geekthelibrary.org, and others created unique and localized messages. Most reported increased interest in the campaign when using the screensavers.



Statesboro Regional Library System in Georgia captured a photo of its first newspaper ad insertion in the *Statesboro Herald* and embedded it in an e-mail directed to community leaders to announce the awareness campaign. Staff also developed local library funding charts to educate the public at events and in the library.



Waukee Public Library in Iowa found an effective way to create buzz about Geek the Library and encourage patrons to share what they geek. The library displayed a collection of employee photos featuring their own personal geeks.



Zion-Benton Public Library in Illinois went where the traffic was. Having already created a Ride & Read program at the train station that takes hundreds of people in and out of Chicago every day, staff decided to make this a Geek the Library opportunity with customized stickers.



Many pilot libraries created eye-catching displays within the library and at other locations around the community to get patrons asking questions and talking about the campaign. Some libraries were able to develop displays for local municipal buildings, civic centers and schools.

Summary

Participating library staff played a critical role in making the campaign meaningful and impactful in their communities. Getting out into the community consistently helped many library leaders and staff ensure that their communities learned about the value of libraries and the critical funding issues they face, and made the connection between the campaign and funding. Field observations and library feedback confirm that some participants considered this kind of community outreach—especially to influential members of the community, including public officials—unfamiliar territory, while others were comfortable in this role. The campaign gave them a vehicle to start community conversations.

It was clear that there were many distinct factors leading to individual library success. Factors included:

- Willingness to commit the resources necessary to execute a fully functioning local awareness campaign
- Creativity and engagement in funding ways to build on and localize the campaign
- Educating the community and connecting Geek the Library to the library's story
 - Explaining what 'geek' means and sharing the purpose of the campaign, and using the messages as launching pads for more detailed library funding discussions
 - Bridging the topics of usage and funding, and value and need

- Using the campaign to build or expand relationships between the library and the community, especially influential members of the community, including elected officials
- Encouraging spread of the campaign by taking advantage of the people and organizations closest to them, such as library support groups.

We thank the pilot library staff and leaders for their tremendous efforts and consistent feedback. Pilot participants said:

“The Geek the Library campaign is effective because it is flexible. You can quickly personalize it to engage people of all ages.”

“The advertising makes a big splash, which causes people to come up and ask what it’s about when they see us at an event. It was also great to have the advertising bring up the funding issue, so it wasn’t coming directly from us.”

“[Geek the Library] has made a lot more people aware that the library needs more funding.”

“I frequently had people noticing the ads and they’d mention it to me. This was especially the case as we moved through it and they were more accustomed to seeing the ads.”

“The large ads in the local papers were very visually appealing and definitely made people in the community more aware.”

“Overall the community embraced the campaign. I think it was most effective with young people and educators.”

“Everyone seemed to like the ‘geek’ idea because geeks are more popular and acceptable than they used to be. It was fun for everyone to turn the noun into a verb.”

“The campaign has been very good for public awareness. We have lots of support from people who say they love the campaign and that continues to be the case.”

“While I can’t prove that Geek the Library helped generate additional funding for my library, I do know that my city council recently overwhelmingly moved to add additional funds to my library—funds that had been denied by the city administrator, but which the city council members restored. Perhaps Geek the Library was a motivating factor.”

“The Geek the Library campaign has given us invaluable knowledge about where advertisements are the most effective in our community. This has helped us when planning events and supplied data for grant applications.”

“[The community] thinks it was a very professional campaign and really eye-catching.”

The pilot participants’ experiences paved the way for new libraries to successfully implement the campaign. Everything we learned during the pilot campaign informed development of materials and guides to help other libraries that adopt the campaign in the future. Geek the Library is currently open to all U.S. public libraries.