The story of a pop up library: Promoting digital resources in the community

<u>Abstract</u>

Introduction

Promoting online collections in public libraries has been a long standing problem. The take-up of our online offerings has often been slow and, given the dollar investment, not giving always value for money.

Over the past few years we have added to these digital offerings with eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagaziines, eMovies, eMusic, eNewspapers and more. But customer knowledge of the availability of these products is still low.

At Bayside library we have decided on a different approach, let's get out to where our customers and potential customers are, and so the *Pop Up Digital elibrary* was born.

Results

With help from the Council Communications department we have a range of collateral that is bright and cheerful and clearly aimed at spreading the word about the library and all our free digital material.

We have a large banner 3.4 x 3m, a couple of tub desks, lanyards, hats, vests and brochures all bearing the distinct pop up library look. Along with these we redesigned the eLibrary Resources page to fit in with the branding and made sure that potential customers could easily find the Join Online link.

So far we have been to two Council events, and spent a week of early mornings at the local train station to catch up with commuters and potential customers of digital resources. Coupled with the station outing we also purchased advertising on trains to keep the branding fresh in commuter's minds.

Conclusion

We are now evaluating the response to our promotions by keeping a careful eye on the number of online memberships, hits on the web page and any spikes in digital content use.

There is still a way to go before we can call the project a success, or not, but staff have certainly enjoyed getting outside the library and interacting with the community. The conference paper will explore the set-up of the project, the costs, and the results.

Paper

Introduction

Promoting online collections in public libraries has been a long standing challenge. The take-up of our online offerings has often been slow and, given the dollar investment, not always giving the return on investment we should be seeing. Customer knowledge of the availability of these products is still low with our existing customers and with potential customers even less so. Many library services across Victoria have tried different promotions and, as libraries do, we have shared the highs and lows. So at Bayside we decided we should get out to where our potential, and current, customers were and so the *Pop Up Digital eLibrary* was born.

Background

Over decades of working in public libraries there has always been a dilemma with how to promote online resources. There has been time and energy devoted to ensuring that our customers are aware of the products we have on offer and many different methods have been tried, shelf talkers, posters, fliers, hanging signs, media displays, favourite resource of the month, the list goes on. All of these have had varying degrees of success, Melbourne City Library Services' *OI!* (Online Information) campaign is a good example of one promotional campaign that worked. But by and large it's been a very hit and miss affair.

Today, with the take up of eBooks, eAudio, eNewspapers and other 'e' products, we are still struggling to make all the products on offer known to our current customers, while potential customers have virtually no knowledge of what's on offer. The

statewide marketing group, Libmark, has spent time delving into this problem and sharing ideas across the state but we still haven't come up with a simple solution. And to be realistic the solution isn't simple, the promotion of eResources needs to run across a wide variety of formats in many different locations and this of course can mean a big dollar investment.

At Bayside we run many outreach programs across the municipality and attended community events to promote the library service. These had varying degrees of success but still weren't hitting the spot in relation to the range of eResources on offer. We hadn't tried the concept of a pop-up library and thinking about the problem of 'e' promotions and ways in which we might reach our potential customers, we decided to combine the pop-up concept with the promotion of a particular service offering, namely digital resources.

There has been a lot of talk in recent times about Library pop-ups, interestingly this is not a new concept. In the 1860 edition of the Melbourne Directory a promotion for the Melbourne Circulating Library (est. 1853) is offering a pop up service *"For the convenience of Families who reside in the suburbs, and Agency Office has recently been opened in close proximity to Flinders Street Railway Station, where books maybe left and exchanged daily, without the trouble and delay of coming to the library".* Many papers and reports have been written on the modern Pop-up Library, a great one is available on the Public Libraries Victoria Network (PLVN) website, www.plvn.net.au. As the saying goes, "Everything old is new again".

Setting up

Once we had made the decision to explore what a pop-up might look like we approached the Council communications department to seek advice. They were very excited about the potential for this promotion and were very helpful with ideas, graphic design, sourcing suppliers and ordering product, and ways to cross promote. Once we had decided to go ahead with the project we then had to look at budget and develop a project plan. Fortunately we had a small sum of money to use for local priority projects which is provided by the state government and so we decided this would be a great investment for this grant money.

The project plan

WBS	Tasks	Task Lead	Start	End
1	**Digital equipment $2,500**	IT Coordinator	1/02/15	31/05/15
1.1	3 iPads	IT Coordinator	15/04/15	24/04/15
1.2	Determine Content	Promotions and Collections	30/04/15	4/05/15
1.3	Configure iPads as required		15/05/15	16/05/15
1.3.1	Ensure chargers and leads are available	IT Coordinator	15/05/15	19/05/15
1.4	Load promotional video on iPad	Still in development	15/05/15	19/05/15
2	**Venues**	Manager	15/04/15	4/05/15
2.1	Contact Public Transport Victoria to discuss process for permits for displaying at train stations	Manager	15/04/15	4/05/15
2.2	Footpath trading permit if required	Manager	20/04/15	29/04/15
2.3	Source Volunteer staff	Manager	20/04/15	9/05/15
2.4	Book spot at Carols and Bright n Sandy Festival	Manager	30/04/15	4/05/15
3	**Banner for Pop-Up $2,300**	Promotions	12/04/15	16/05/15
3.1	Concept Design	Communications	12/04/15	9/05/15

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3.2	Source supplier and order		30/04/15	27/05/15
4	**Video $4,000**	Promotions	12/04/15	23/05/15
4.1	Content Finalised and supplier briefed	Still in development	12/04/15	23/05/15
5	**Media release**	Promotions	1/05/15	14/05/15
5.1	Draft release	Communications		9/01/00
5.1.1	Submit release			1/01/00
6	**Train advertising $5,000**	Communications		27/01/00
6.1	Concept design	Communications	10/05/15	19/05/15
6.1.1	Place ad		20/05/15	29/05/15
7	**Advertising $3500**	Promotions		27/01/00
7.1	Concept design	Communications	10/05/15	19/05/15
7.1.1	Place ad		20/05/15	29/05/15
8	**Collateral $5,000 Brochure, vests, hats & lanyards**	Promotions	12/04/15	21/05/15
8.1	Concept Design	Communications	12/04/15	9/05/15
8.1.1	Ordering and printing		9/05/15	18/05/15
9	**Social Media**	Promotions	30/05/15	28/06/15
9.1	Design set of social media concepts		20/04/15	29/04/15
10	**Pull-up Banners in Library $600 and A-frame board $200**	Promotions	12/04/15	21/05/15
10.1	Design	Communications	12/04/15	21/04/15
10.1.1	Source supplier and order		21/04/15	27/04/15
	Total budget $23,100			

The equipment

The Council graphic designer developed a range of collateral that is bright and cheerful and clearly aimed at attracting attention and spreading the word about the library and all our free digital material. The 3.4 x 3m display wall folds up neatly into a case the size of a large wheeled suitcase that weighs about 25 kgs, and it literally does takes five minutes to unpack and erect. The two tub desks are on wheels and,

as they have a lid, collateral and other things can be stored inside for transportation, they have a cover that when not in use is stored inside the tub. The three large pieces fit snuggly into the bag of a Mazda 3 hatchback with the seat down.

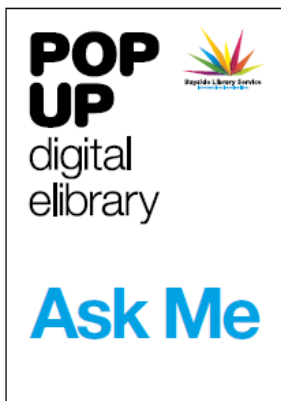**Pop up display wall**
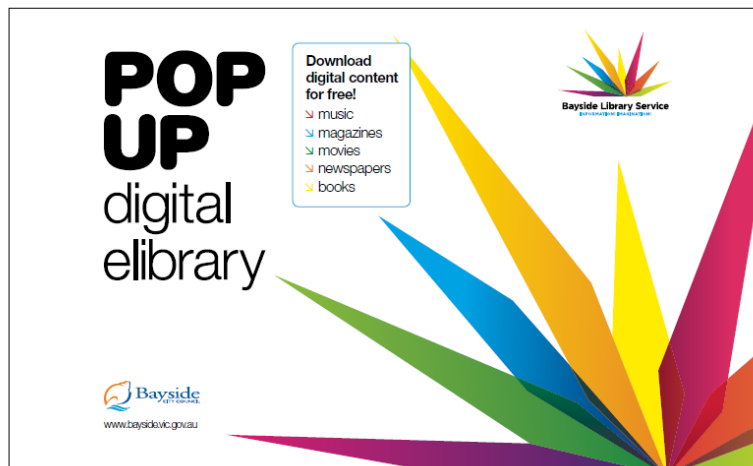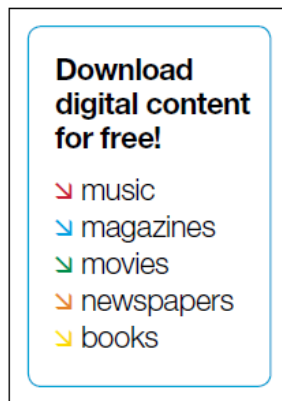

Pull up banners
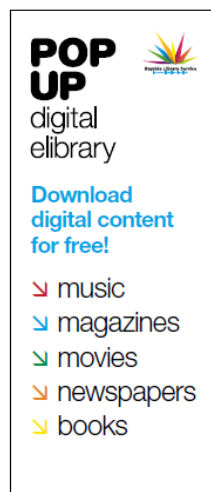
Counter

Tradeshow Counter example

Lanyard

Front

Back

A-frame board

Vest

The eLibrary Resources page was redesigned to match the branding and the Join Online link was made prominent to ensure it could be easily found by potential new customers.

Website

Brochures were designed to be simple and yet eye catching an easy size to pop into a pocket or bag.

Brochure

There is a saying in marketing that *"people need to see something a minimum of ten times before it registers"* so the elibrary look has been spread around as many places as possible so that customers, and potential customers have an opportunity to see it as many times as possible. Advertising was booked for the local paper, on the Council home page web banner, in the libraries and in trains, all to coincide to have the most impact during our first promotional campaign at the train station. The train advertising ran for a month from the first day of the promotion with seventy-five, 340x400mm signs on the back of seats and fifteen, 1200x240mm signs above the windows. Public Transport Victoria guaranteed it would stay on the Sandringham line trains (the trains running through the municipality) for 80% of the time. Each morning we were at the station trains were checked for signs as they waited on the platform and while none were seen a Council staff member reported that they had seen them on a trip into the city.

Train advertisements

Three iPads, which were 4g and wifi enabled, were specifically configured to display the digital content and each came with its own membership details so that logging onto all the products was simple.

iPad
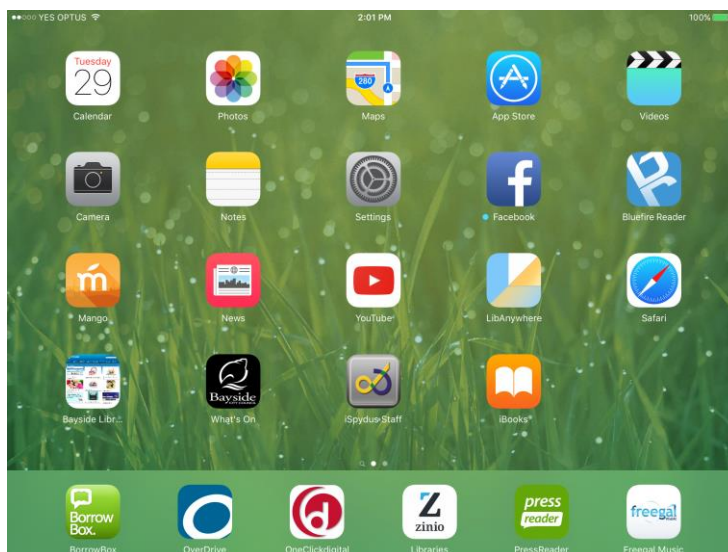
Other critical items were sandbags to weigh down the display banner; a cheat sheet of the iPad membership details, passwords and PINs; display stands and other library brochures that may be of interest.

Other costs to be considered was staff time, we needed to ensure there was enough in the budget to cover part-time staff additional hours and to allow full-time staff time-in-lieu for any additional hours and for overtime hours worked. This was hard to estimate as it depended on what opportunities there were available to take the pop up out to the community.

Once we had all the equipment ready we understood that none of this could happen without the staff and so a recruitment campaign went out to all staff, both permanent and casual, to "volunteer", (that is, get additional hours or time-in-lieu). All they needed was digital literacy skills and a knowledge of the products which the library offered (which one hoped was everybody), and a desire to get up very early in some cases. It took a bit of cajoling and begging but eventually enough staff put up their hand to try it out.

In action

We decided to make our first outing low key so we popped along to the annual Pet Expo run in the Council grounds. It was a beautiful day and saying hello to the dogs as they walked past with owners in tow was a great segue into "did you know the library had free

eBooks?" and we could then show them on the iPad some of the products available. It was interesting to talk to a wide range of people who were members but had no idea we had all of these products. We did learn two big things. One, the banner is very light and while we had it weighted down with small sandbags even the slightest breeze will tip it over so it needed to be backed up to something. Two, iPads aren't fabulous on bright sunny days. We have taken these on board when thinking about where we position the banner and how we can get into the shade.

The next day we took the Pop-up display to Sandringham train station, we had obtained a permit from Public Transport Victoria to set up the pop-up library for five mornings from 7.00am to 8.30am. The advertising was in place, with the train ads set to commence and advertising to appear in the local paper coming out that day. Staff arrived bright and early and handed out brochures to commuters, occasionally having conversations and showing off some of the product. Opening lines included "Did you know the library had free

eBooks?" or "Did you know you can get free eMagazines from the library?" Most people on the first day didn't have time to stop and take a longer look at the product on the iPads but in the following days, people who had taken a look at the brochure stopped to speak to us and find out more. A staff member joined up one of the bus drivers who saw us while he was waiting for his next scheduled departure and was very interested in what we had to offer. One lesson learnt was that people heading

for trains don't have much time to talk so we were very aware not get in anyone's way if there was only a minute to go till the next train departure!

The next outing was to the Carols in the Park event. This was not so successful, it was a little breezy and while we had asked to be placed somewhere that would allow us to back up to another tent or a wall unfortunately this didn't happen and so we had to take the banner down. It was also the wrong crowd for this sort of promotion because they were there to watch the carols and found themselves a spot and sat, only venturing away from their seats to get food. We needed a passing crowd in order to spike their interest and got them to stop and chat.

Far more successful was the Bright n Sandy Food and Wine Festival, a council run annual event that attracts a crowd of 20,000 people. We took note of the lessons learnt and made sure we were in a shady spot and had the banner backed up

against a wall. Staff proactively 'worked' the crowd by wandering around the grounds handing out brochures to people and telling them about the eResources. Many people came to find the display to find out more about what we had to offer.

Measuring Success

We are now evaluating the response to our promotions by keeping a careful eye on the number of online memberships, hits on the web page and any spikes in digital

content use. When customers join the library online they need never come into the library, they can the services online straight away. Membership information and a library card are sent out to the mailing address supplied and if they eventually do want to come to the physical library and borrow something in print they simply need to bring in some ID.

During the train station promotion period there was an increase in online memberships the week of the campaign and the following week. Other promotions haven't shown the same result for online membership but we are hoping that the more we are out and about the more people are become aware of what's on offer. Customers joining in the libraries showed a marked increase during the train campaign and immediately following the Bright n Sandy Festival.

Online memberships

Date	Event	Online Memberships
2015		
Week ending 15/112015	Pet Expo	5
Week ending 22/11/2015	Station	32
Week ending 29/11/2015		21
Week ending 5/12/2015		10
2016		
Week ending 13/03/16	Bright n Sandy Festival	10

In-Library Memberships

Date	Event	In-Library Memberships
2015		
Week ending 15/112015	Pet Expo	81

Week ending 22/11/2015	Station	125
Week ending 29/11/2015		98
2016		
Week ending 13/03/16	Bright n Sandy Festival	114
Week ending 20/03/16		81

As the elibrary page was set up for the campaign there is no data from prior to the promotion, use of the page showed a spike during the week at the train station of 524 hits, with the week following at 274 hits. The average has remained steady at around 220 hits per week, even following the Bright n Sandy Festival promotion.

The eResource usage is increasing steadily, but there has been no discernible impact immediately following Pop up campaigns; however there has been an overall increase of 43% in the use of the digital collection since the first Pop up event in November 2015.

eResource loans

Date	Bolinda ebooks	Bolinda eaudios	Overdrive	OneClick	Zinio	Freegal	Total
16-22 Nov 2015	179	143	49	21	51	44	487
23-29 Nov	204	148	65	23	76	56	572
30 Nov - 6 Dec	203	182	62	25	74	59	605
7 - 13 Dec	227	161	69	37	143	50	687
28 Feb - 6 Mar 2016	219	240	73	51	160	48	791
7 - 13 Mar	204	190	61	39	157	48	699

So far we have been to two Council events, and spent a week of early mornings at the local train station to catch up with commuters and potential customers of digital resources. There is still a way to go before we can call the project a success, or not,

but staff have certainly enjoyed getting outside the library and interacting with the community.

Conclusion

Promoting digital content has been a challenge and the *Pop Up Library* has been a new and exciting venture for the library service to try out new ways of promoting products and services. Staff have enjoyed getting out and meeting customers in a different environment and we have has some small successes. We will continue to attend community events and more train station promotions are in the planning stages. It was a bit of effort to set everything up but now that all the collateral is available to use at any time we hope to make more use of the *Pop Up Digital elibrary.*

References

Pop Up Libraries - Asha Davis, Mildura Rural City Council Library Service; Celia Rice, Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation; Deanne Spagnolo, Brimbank Libraries; Josephine Struck, Moreland City Libraries; Suzie Bull, Mornington Peninsula Libraries