

Library Communication Plan 2017

In a time of rapid change, Cornell University Library continues to stand at the center of intellectual life at Cornell. Yet even as increased reliance on electronic resources necessitates sophisticated curation and analysis of information, academic libraries battle a perception of threatened obsolescence. It is more important than ever before that the Cornell community and library stakeholders understand libraries' imperative role in ensuring that knowledge remains accessible and enabling faculty and students to participate effectively in the digital landscape. At the same time, students, faculty and other stakeholders are constantly bombarded with information, making it ever more difficult to break through the noise and make them fully aware of the essential library resources that facilitate the world-changing scholarship that defines Cornell.

Purpose

This plan is intended to formalize and communicate Cornell University Library promotion priorities for the coming year. This will enable various CUL units to create and maintain consistent messaging about the Library's centrality in Cornell University's mission to foster learning, discovery, and engagement. Consistent messaging is critical in shaping library stakeholders' perceptions, and deepening their support of CUL.

The plan responds to the Library's [vision and mission](#), user data collected via assessment projects and communication best practices in the higher education domain. The incorporation of assessment findings into communication initiatives ensures that library messaging is trustworthy, targeted, and powerful. More detailed information about Communications' roles and resources within Cornell University Library can be found [here](#).

Communications is part of the mission of the Library's Assessment and Communication Department; for the sake of brevity, we've referred below to our efforts as those of Library Communications.

Audiences

Cornell is a complex and diverse institution operating on a global scale. Cornell University Library serves a multifaceted constituency with 17 unit libraries meeting the needs of a wide range of disciplines.

Audiences can be visualized as concentric circles with internal groups in the middle, and external audiences on the periphery. The main internal audiences are Cornell faculty, students, college and university administrators, and academic staff. External audiences include alumni, current and potential donors, prospective faculty and students and, as the library supports Cornell's engagement and internationalization initiatives, local, national, and global communities.

The most effective messages are customized for a targeted audience. When producing library communication products, additional, granular segmentations are based on a nuanced understanding of our constituencies.

Key messages

The Library's services, collections and expertise are indispensable. In an increasingly digital and global landscape, the library is uniquely situated to prepare students to effectively use and produce knowledge. The Library facilitates faculty research, from investigation to dissemination. It makes Cornell scholarship and creative expression visible and accessible around the world, and ensures preservation and accessibility of scholarly output for future generations. Our expertise, advocacy, and global partnerships enhance the University's engagement and international goals, both here and abroad.

Communication goals

Communications constantly works to effectively communicate our key messages so all stakeholders understand that the Library is indispensable to Cornell, higher education and society. Raising awareness about library services, collections, expertise, and spaces leads to increased use of important offerings, which, in turn, enriches students' experience and enhances faculty research. Additionally, our efforts help to elevate the Cornell brand to increase support in advocacy or in resources for CUL.

It takes a village

In a service organization such as CUL, every in-person and online interaction provides an opportunity to tell a story about the library's importance. Consistency makes library messages more powerful. To this end, Communications provides staff information and training.

Last year, the Assessment and Communication Department collaborated with a Johnson School MBA class to conduct a study examining the marketing and branding effectiveness of two key library services, liaisons and Ask a Librarian. The MBA students concluded that building relationships with new and established faculty was imperative to ensuring wide use of the Library both by students and faculty.

Discipline-specific library liaisons are intended to be one of faculty's most important entry points into library offerings. Through training and assistance, Library Communications helps liaisons effectively promote the Library's essential role.

Due to the omnipresence of the internet, it is also critical for staff at all levels to be cognizant of the elements that create a consistent and powerful brand image of CUL on the web. Communications offers training, guidelines, and other tools to help them accomplish these goals.

Partnerships

To be fully effective, Communications relies on strategic partnerships and collaborations within the Library, University, and beyond, and part of its charge is to develop and maintain these crucial relationships.

Internal partnerships include relationships with associate university librarians, library directors, liaisons, communications staff at unit libraries, curators and others at special collections, and social media practitioners.

On the University level relations, with the Media Relations Office, greater University Relations, and communications partners at colleges and units across the University help the Library stay informed about university communication priorities and strategic initiatives, and ensure that central communications' staff and resources promote the library's services, collections, programs, and events on Cornell's outlets and beyond. We partner with staff in both academic and administrative units when doing so increases the effectiveness of our story-telling or reach.

While collaborating with our partners in Media Relations on high-impact stories, Communications also cultivates relationships with media professionals in both library-specific and general interest publications to garner the widest possible coverage.

Audience-specific tactics

FACULTY: A recent survey of faculty confirmed that they regard Cornell University Library very highly, but many respondents said they were not aware of library services that could help them with their teaching and research. In addition to reaching faculty directly through liaisons and other staff, Communications informs faculty about relevant services through

- Emails sent each semester by the University Librarian

- Printed materials with relevant information about specific, high-priority services, combined with business cards for library liaisons, to inform them and keep them aware of librarians' contact information
- Other printed materials such as posters and brochures
- Stories in the Cornell Chronicle and other relevant media channels about library services and initiatives, such as the Digital Grants awards that allows Arts and Sciences faculty to collaborate with the Library to digitize important collections
- Digital signs in libraries
- Email lists to specific departments
- Messaging on the Library's homepage or Cornell.edu
- Social media

STUDENTS: Communications employs a student intern over the summer, and a student assistant during the semester, to assist with promotional materials and campaigns aimed at their fellow undergraduates. Communications also works closely with library staff to promote and publicize programs and events aimed at undergraduate and graduate students, such as informational fairs for new students; SPARK Talks for graduate students and postdoctoral associates; Study Abroad services; and other events, programs, workshops, and exhibits.

Communications has been reaching students in a variety of ways:

- Visual material for orientation events and campus spaces
- Writing stories for the Cornell Chronicle and other relevant media outlets and pitching stories to the Cornell Daily Sun
- Social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Short informational videos about library services, expertise, collections, and spaces
- Materials for international fairs and study abroad programs, to reach global audiences
- Digital signs
- Newsletters
- BlackBoard and other digital spaces that students use
- Library.cornell.edu and cornell.edu
- Printed materials, such as stickers, posters, bookmarks and temporary tattoos

ALUMNI: Alumni, including current and potential donors, are an important constituency for the Library as well as the University, and Communications strives to keep them engaged and aware. Many alumni are important contributors to the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections and other archives within the Library, including but not limited to the University Archives. Cornell alumni are leaders in their fields all over the world, and their positive regard for the Library is a significant factor in maintaining and elevating its brand awareness. Making alumni aware of how they can help the Library, and how the Library is promoting issues they care about, is an important element in Communications' overall goals. Communications helps alumni and donors stay connected to the Library through

- Stories in Ezra Magazine and Ezra Update about initiatives involving or of interest to alumni, and pitches to the Cornell Alumni Magazine
- Biannual e-newsletters from the university librarian
- Speeches given by the university librarian at alumni-attended events such as Reunions
- Promoting events of interest to alumni, such as Reunion exhibitions, with social media, digital signs, chalkboards, press releases and news stories
- Social media, including videos highlighting important collections or exhibitions, on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Printed material, such as holiday cards and keepsakes
- Invitations and promotion for Library Salons

GENERAL AUDIENCES: Promoting the Library and its brand to a general audience that includes potential students and donors, leaders in the academic library community, international policy makers and current or future partners, happens in a variety of ways, including

- Press releases
- Facilitating media coverage of the Library
- Social media

Measuring success

Data and research results help Communications craft messaging based on our key audiences' needs, challenges and priorities, as well as their perceptions of the Library's strengths and weaknesses. Data guides our promotional efforts, and makes them maximally strategic and effective. Frequently testing marketing products with representatives of the appropriate target audience ensures the right fit.

Major user surveys have identified significant awareness gaps about several library services. Repeating these surveys every three to five years will measure awareness trends that the Library's communication efforts can then help elevate.

Overall, we continue building on our traditionally strong image and user attachment to gradually expand the brand identity of the 21st century research library.

Balance of activities

The nature of communication activities is that proactive and reactive always intertwine, and strategic measures sometimes have to take a back seat to tactical operations. Opportunities for positive publicity often arise from current events, and communication work requires flexibility to take full advantage of

emerging media potential. Similarly, Communications must be constantly aware of potential threats to the Library's brand and reputation, and prepared to take steps to mitigate any negative coverage.

While acting strategically and constructively is always preferable to reacting defensively, unanticipated opportunities and threats are inevitable, and any realistic Communication plan needs to acknowledge and factor in flexibility to satisfactorily manage these types of occurrences.

2017 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Increase user awareness of library services and expertise.
[Possible measures of success include change in awareness level as measured via library surveys.]
 - a. Ask a Librarian campaign
 - b. Faculty brochure
 - c. Update library presence on BlackBoard and other university sites
 - d. Support orientation
 - e. Targeted promotion based on Graduate Survey findings
 - f. Represent communication goals on CUL website team

- 2) Communicate library impact.
[Possible measures of success include number and/or reach of stories in Cornell and external publications.]
 - a. Revisit and conceptualize a high-impact and low-overhead annual CUL publication to represent the accomplishments and impact of the Library
 - b. Produce and place library stories in Cornell and general media

- 3) Highlight and broaden exposure of library collections and expertise through videos.
[Possible measures of success include analytics on social media, YouTube, and library-owned websites.]
 - a. Pilot exhibit tours
 - b. Collection highlights for social media
 - c. Build library B-roll for future videos
 - d. Library testimonials/tips for international students
 - e. Library testimonials/tips for all students

- 4) Support next fundraising campaign.
[Possible measures of success include number and/or reach of stories and social media posts]
 - a. Continue to build the Library's presence in Ezra and Ezra Updates

- b. Work with Cornell Alumni Affairs and Development (AA&D) and unit libraries to create case statements
 - c. Work with AA&D and University Librarian on alumni newsletter
 - d. Promote crowdfunding and other fundraising campaigns through social media
- 5) Support and train library staff to increase their effectiveness in promoting the Library.
[Possible measures of success could include number of collaborations with library staff on crafting messaging and talking points.]
- a. Provide staff training opportunities
 - b. Help create liaison talking points
 - c. Assist staff in preparing messages aimed at faculty, administrators and students