

## Taking the Show on the Road

### College Promotions

Several years ago the library was approached by one of the local college librarians asking if we would visit the college and promote public library services to the whole of the school. This was breaking into territory we were unfamiliar with, however it was an opportunity we could not miss.

Of course there were hurdles we had to deal with first such as - what messages did we want to deliver, who would do the presentation and what would it 'look like'.

First of all we looked at our audience - teenagers! That was pretty scary in the first place. We looked at what we thought would interest teens, what would they want to know about the library and its services. We wanted the team to be accepted by the students, we also wanted to move away from the old perceptions of librarians. We decided that we would have a team of people that would reflect the ethnic differences of the students. This was so they would feel comfortable with us. We wanted young people who could relate to the students. Also staff that work in a library the students might use in their areas. So the team consisted of different cultures, genders who worked at different sites. We asked for volunteers and also did a bit of shoulder tapping. We ended up with a really good team of people.

Then it was time to think about what we would take with us. A ghetto blaster was a must, and loud. We had a variety of new books, magazines and information of our web services. As we were on a recruitment drive there were registration and change of address forms too. The students were unable to have items issued to them, however they were able to reserve the items.

One of our customer specialists did the talking and the rest of the team helped students with their enquiries. All this happened directly outside the college library in a foyer. These presentations took place over two days.

We had another request to deliver our presentation to 4<sup>th</sup> formers at another college. Then we thought it was a fantastic idea so we contacted other colleges in the Wellington area offering them tailor made promotions for their new college entrants. We have been doing these promotions for 5 years now and have covered all the students in some colleges and most in others. We have contacted all the secondary institutions in the area with a letter, following up with a phone call. We have had requests from teachers to do the presentation to them.

Over the years we have changed many aspects of the programme. One being that team members share the responsibility of all tasks and the customer specialists take a back seat. The customer specialists do contact the colleges and pass the information onto Jenni and Danny to coordinate the programme. Technology improvements include a laptop and projector in each cluster which the team uses.

#### **Statistics:**

In 2002 we promoted to 2 colleges (approximately 800 students) and took 122 new registrations, updated 227 library cards and took 34 reserves.

In 2003 we made contact with 1855 students, we had 192 new registrations, updated 597 cards and took 73 reserves.

In 2004 we made contact with 1567 students at 11 colleges. We had 244 new registrations, updated 255 cards and took 70 reserves for library items.

So far in 2005 we have seen 1653 students at 9 colleges, had 237 new registrations, updated 432 cards and taken 38 reserves. The reduction in reservations echoes the large amount of online reserves the library receives.

We are now providing this service to 90% of the colleges in the Wellington area.

### **Special Deals**

To make it attractive and exciting for the kids we have a few special offers for the college visits. We can change their old children's library card for a flash new young adult one for no charge (it costs \$2 if you do them in the library).

To encourage teens to reignite their library membership we made a deal with the debt retrieval team to waive up to \$20 overdue fees off their cards, no questions asked. In the PowerPoint presentation we emphasize that all young adult material is free to young adult card holders.

### **Why do we do college visits?**

- To keep the ties strong between Wellington City Libraries and Colleges, especially the students
- To re-ignite membership cards, upgrading from Child cards to Young Adult. This also keeps our customer records up to date.
- To promote WCL website and online services. Catalogue searching, reserving and use of the databases for homework are some of the things highlighted.
- To promote the library and its diverse services available to the age group
- We also take along a selection of new material and new editions of classics to showcase the physical collection available to teenagers.

### **What Makes a Good Visit?**

Make it tailored to the individual college's requirements, time allowances and resources but keeping the same basic structure. For example some colleges have requested more emphasis on the databases for study use and less on printed collection.

Having a good working relationship with the school librarian, this is reinforced by the visits. It is a valuable networking opportunity for the schools and WCL.

Our team is made up of library staff from all over the Wellington network, volunteers who are enthusiastic about working with and speaking to teenagers. We keep the presentations laid back and friendly to keep the kids at their ease. Where possible we send staff from libraries close to the college so they'll see a familiar face if they go to their local branch.

**The Structure of College Promotions:**

1. A quick introduction of the team members and the library services available.
2. The PowerPoint Presentation that one person talks to.
3. Questions and answers
4. Browsing time where the students can look at the material we've brought and fill out forms. Staff intermingle amongst the students, and answer any questions that come up.

**Checklist of what to take:**

- Pens
- Registration forms, reservations cards, change of address/updating forms, Our promotional "Your guide to joining the Library" booklet, [www.myGateway.info](http://www.myGateway.info) bookmarks/cards, [www.anyquestions.co.nz](http://www.anyquestions.co.nz) stickers
- CD player (from own site) and CDs to play
- New material includes CDs, DVDs, books, graphic novels, magazines -
- For security reasons remove all the discs from the CDs and DVDs
- 2 promotional banners
- Backup disc for laptop
- Trolley wheels to transport our presentation resources to our designated area.
- Examples of library cards and stickers

**Some Problems We Have Encountered:**

- Sometimes the equipment at some of the colleges isn't available or the live connections are unavailable
- Technology problems: back-up disc and USB key with our PowerPoint presentation stored. Internet unavailable, projector malfunction, etc.
- Keeping your PowerPoint presentation up to date, especially if including screenshots of websites.
- Staffing: Making sure there are staff available to do the visit while ensuring cover at home sites, coping with sickness, leave, etc.
- The security of the collection while off-site.
- Access to a laptop and projector
- Timeframe of the visits - trying to fit in with the scholastic year
- Short notice of interest e.g. request to come next week!
- Students are short of time when we are there so we have to reduce the browsing time available
- Space allocated to the team is sometimes cramped, sometimes not conducive to effective communication

**College Promotions Guidelines:**

Before leaving assemble everything from the checklist and ensure you know the details of the contact person at the college. Give yourself plenty of time to set up and make sure you check in at the college reception. It's important to sign in and check about parking arrangements.

**Setting up**

Once at the area where you will be giving the presentation you can start setting up. Each college will have different requirements from having the usage of their equipment.

- Display any material that you may have brought with you to show to the kids.
- Ensure that you have the laptop and projector ready to go (if required)
- When using school equipment, ask if the IT person is there so if you have questions with their equipment they are on hand to answer it.
- Go over with others in your group how you will be presenting the presentation.

### **Presentation**

This all depends on how much time you have for the classes so you will need to organise what you need to cover. Make the presentation relaxed and informal so the students and you feel at ease. The presentations also allow for everyone in your group to contribute, and basically fill in gaps to help whoever is delivering the main presentation.

- Introduction
- Spiel about Libraries (YA collection, services) just think of it as talking to a new borrower.
- Datashow presentation (PowerPoint slideshow)
- Questions

Make sure all registration and information update forms are fully completed.

We take reserve cards so that kids can reserve the new stock we show them. Be sure they fill in which branch they want the item sent to. They can of course reserve online if they wish.

Keep all the completed forms in one place and remember to count them up for entering on the statistics sheets. These can then be distributed through the team who did the visit and completed at their own sites. The new cards should be sent back to the school quickly.

### **Some of the feedback we've received:**

"You're young, you're cool. The kids will listen to you." - Teacher,

"The sessions were fantastic and your team delivered the message brilliantly with ease and humour. We loved all the resources, had lots of sign ups for WCL so all in all a great success" - School Librarian,.

"The team were so professional with the students. They worked well as a team. The girls were not looking forward to the visit, however when they saw 3 guys and a gal they really picked up interest and really enjoyed the visit" - School Librarian