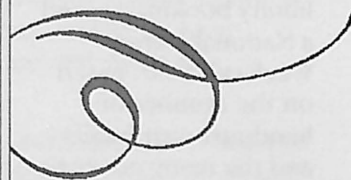


## CONNECTING WITH THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY: PROMOTIONAL SUCCESS THROUGH COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH

by *Teresa Williams*



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ith the myriad of activities offered on a college campus, how does an academic library compete for attendance at its own special programs? As Butler University Libraries discovered during our celebration of National Library Week, sometimes

it takes a mix of events to turn a little marketing idea into a memorable occasion.

### FROM HOOPS TO MUTTS

The reference librarian team at Butler develops promotional activities for the Libraries, which include Irwin (the main library) and the Lilly Science Library. As we planned for National Library Week 2007, we unanimously agreed it was time to debut our own Read posters. These popular posters, which are designed using software from the American Library Association (ALA), have been widely displayed at all types of libraries and often feature a well-known celebrity, such as an actor or athlete.

We focused on finding our own Butler celebrities, with the idea of choosing one to be the “star of show” at a poster unveiling ceremony. Our first thought was to recruit our men’s basketball team, which had recently made national sports headlines by advancing to the “Sweet 16” in the National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament. A poster of the team members holding their favorite books would spark interest and draw a crowd to our event. This idea was dropped, however, when the campus athletics office questioned whether the inclusion of the books in the poster might be seen as an endorsement of a commercial product. This meant the posters would not comply with regulations regarding promotions by student-athletes.

But what about the team mascot? After all, Blue the Butler Bulldog is no ordinary mutt. He is a living, breathing English Bulldog, registered with the American Kennel Club. Just three years old, Blue sports a sleek tan and white coat and weighs a solid 60 pounds. He attends university events and comes to work on campus nearly every week. With his photogenic appearance and good-natured personality, Blue was a perfect candidate for our celebrity poster project.

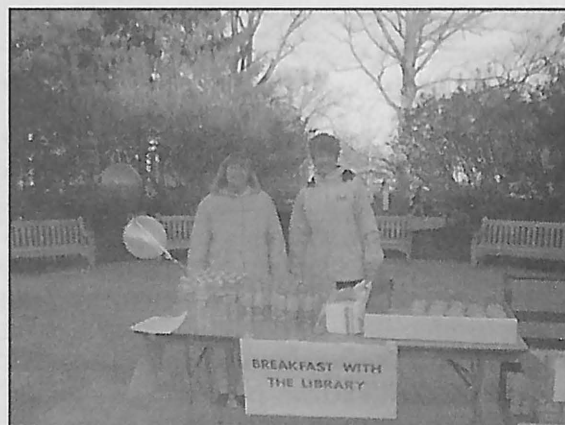
We contacted the campus Advancement office, which handles Blue’s schedule, and were excited when we received permission to photograph the dog with a favorite book of our choosing. With Blue on board, we expanded our list of celebrities, and a request for participation was sent to administrators and academic department heads. In addition, the university’s marketing department and photographer were invited to collaborate on the project.

The posters were off to a great start, but we knew we needed a way to extend the reach of our National Library Week promotion. With some creative brainstorming and a budget of around \$500, we came up with several ideas involving two key elements: staff participation and campus outreach. What follows is our menu of events and the lessons learned from each.

### 1. Breakfast and a Coffee Break

We kicked off the week by offering “Breakfast with the Library” at the center of the campus mall to attract students, staff, and faculty on their way to work and class. Along with free donuts and juice, we distributed our National Library Week materials, which included a schedule of the week’s events. Word quickly spread about free food, and we had distributed everything, including all of our promotional literature, by mid-morning.

To further increase our visibility, we set up a display at one of the busiest spots on campus—the



“Breakfast with the Library” event

Starbucks coffee shop. The display included copies of selected celebrity posters, library bookmarks, and a National Library Week calendar. Based on the number of handouts distributed and the many positive comments we received from Starbucks patrons, we know this form of outreach was a worthwhile way to publicize the Libraries and their services.

## 2. Favorite Books Display and Quiz

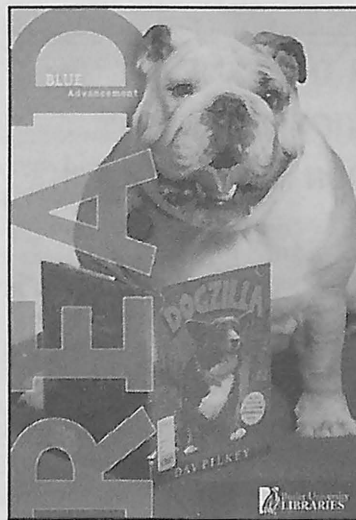
To help maintain a celebratory atmosphere for an entire week, we needed the cooperation of as many library staff members as possible. While not every staff member agreed to be featured in a Read poster, most were eager to share the title of a favorite book and the reason they chose it. This information, along with a small photo of each staff member holding his or her book, was used to create a staff "Favorite Books" display in the lobby of the main library.

This exhibit allowed us to introduce our staff to library visitors. It also tied into a quiz about our favorite books, and the quiz instructions included a hint that all answers were on display at Irwin Library. The purpose of this clue was to encourage those who wanted to win a contest prize (a celebrity Read poster) to physically come to the library rather than limit their patronage to an online visit or none at all. Although an entry box for the favorite books quiz was available at Starbucks, contestants who wanted to take advantage of the hint still had to visit the main library.

The favorite books display was well-received by staff and library visitors. Many people visited the display and checked out the featured books. All but two of the contestants who took the quiz noticed the hint and took the time to visit the staff display at the main library for the correct answers. Most of the contest winners chose the poster of Blue as their prize.

## 3. Write it Down and Check it Out

One of our most popular attractions was also one of the easiest to set up. We found space at both the main library and Starbucks for a large table, which we covered with blank paper and several pens. The table had a sign inviting all reading enthusiasts to "Put It in Writing" by listing the title of their favorite book on the paper tablecloth. This activity proved to be a simple and inexpensive way to attract attention to our National Library Week promotion. Over 200 readers shared the



Blue the Butler Bulldog. Poster courtesy of Butler University Print and Marketing Communications

title of their favorite books, with *The Holy Bible* cited most often. All of the favorite titles were later listed on the Libraries website.

We took the tie-in with Starbucks one step further with a contest that involved our circulation department. Anyone who checked out a library item during National Library Week could enter a daily drawing for a free beverage from the coffee shop. Over 60 people participated in the contest.

## 4. Poster Unveiling

The unveiling of our campus celebrity Read posters took place during the middle of National Library Week. The posters were placed on easels in the main library lobby and, except for the poster of Butler's president, all were covered to hide the celebrity's identity. We had also created Read bookmarks featuring the Butler president and Blue the mascot, and these were available on tables near the posters.

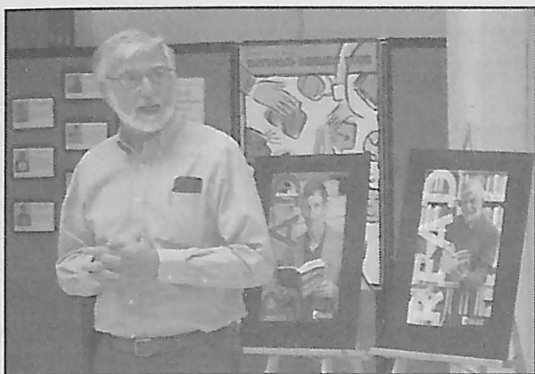
A total of eleven campus celebrities had agreed to be photographed for posters. In addition to the president, we presented posters of the provost, the vice-president of student affairs, and faculty from several departments. Nine were able to attend the ceremony, and many brought along family members and campus friends.

As the posters were revealed one at a time, each celebrity stepped forward to share a few comments on why the book featured in the poster was a favorite. Many also spoke about the importance of libraries in their lives. We had chosen *Dogzilla* by Dav Pilkey to represent Blue's favorite book, and he obediently posed next to his poster for photos.

Butler's president stopped by later in the day to view all the posters and collect some bookmarks for his office. The posters and staff display remained in Irwin Library the rest of the week, where they attracted many curious visitors including prospective students and their parents. The promotional products also revealed the popularity of the university president. Not only did we run out of his bookmarks first, but his posters were stolen from both Starbucks and the main library. As expected, Blue's poster was in high demand, and we have received several inquiries about it since the bulldog's photo appeared in *American Libraries*, an ALA publication (Communities, 2007).



National Library Week Celebration



Lewis Miller, Dean of Libraries at Butler University, describes his favorite book at the Libraries' unveiling of eleven new Read posters featuring campus "celebrities."

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Make it a Team Effort

- The staff posters and favorite book display allowed the majority of our library employees to get involved in a marketing effort. This helped create a feeling of team spirit, which we hope to capture again for future events. When National Library Week ended, staff posters were placed in individual offices as well as public areas of the Libraries, allowing additional opportunities for visitors to get to know our staff.

### Simple Works

- The circulation department drawing and the "Put It in Writing" tables were not only popular but also took little time and money to execute. With these activities, we learned that the success of a project does not have to be measured by the number of steps involved in the process.

### Collaboration Counts

- The poster unveiling involved several Butler employees who work outside the Libraries, from the poster celebrities to staff from the university's departments for marketing and special events. Those who attended the unveiling received acknowledgement of their value to the university and, in return, many sang the praises of the Libraries, both at the ceremony and afterwards. By collaborating with other campus staff, we built a foundation for future promotions that require a joint effort.

### Go to Them

- Perhaps the most important lesson we learned involved the value of campus outreach. The breakfast held on the campus mall and the Starbucks display allowed us to meet those who may rarely visit the Libraries and/or website. By reaching out to them where they tend to gather, we gave them a reason to seek out library services in the future.

## FUTURE PLANS

Everyone involved agreed that our promotion was successful, and we have started making plans for the upcoming National Library Week celebration. In doing so, we have reviewed our events to identify what worked and what could be improved upon or changed.

Promotional materials and posters of pharmacy and health science faculty were available at our Lilly Science Library, but most of the week's events took place at our main library. We plan to strengthen the impact of the next program by including more events at both libraries.

We would also like to extend the poster project to include Butler students. We may ask for nominations for posters of student leaders or develop a contest to reward winners with the opportunity to design their own. We will seek out multiple locations on campus for poster displays and develop additional online tools to reach library users during National Library Week.

## CONCLUSION

It was not any single activity, but instead a combination of several that contributed to our success. Staff participation and outreach beyond the physical confines of the library made the difference for this promotion and will continue to help define our marketing strategies in the future.

## REFERENCES

Communities 'come together' @ their libraries. (2007, June/July). *American Libraries*, 26.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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