

Rebranding the Wells County Public Library as a Go-To Spot

By Emily Marshall

As part of the library's strategic plan, a committee comprising the Wells County Public Library (WCPL) director and 11 department heads evaluated the library's marketing efforts (2012). This was done by taking pictures of every piece of signage, poster, newsletter, and other materials in the library to evaluate their effectiveness as a whole. They also scanned newspaper articles about the library, evaluated public relations efforts, and had informal conversations with patrons asking their opinions about the library's marketing. A few key components were determined:

- Materials were often confusing to patrons because of how different they looked, depending on which staff member designed it. There was also no consistency in design across our print and web materials.
- Our logo's look was outdated and the visual image of a tree branch in the logo did not capture the essence of our library.
- The bulk of the marketing and public relations efforts focused on our primary service of books and neglected many of the hundreds of other services offered by the library.
- Many of the eResources we offered were hard to locate on our Website.

It was decided to do a complete overhaul to help unify all of materials, including print, web, social media, and more and to create a new, easily recognizable brand, logo, and tagline. The goal was to give the library a consistent image that appealed to a younger, technologically savvy target market and to increase the visibility of the library within the community.

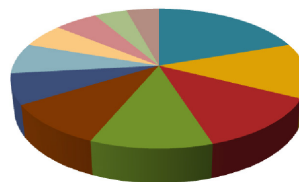
Needs Assessment and Planning:

To assist with creating a new brand, a variety of research techniques were used to determine the needs of residents, and staff members. Through focus groups, surveys among staff members, and a review of a previous patron survey, the staff working on the project looked at how people currently viewed the library, suggestions on improving the library, and what marketing products they were most likely to use. Findings included:

- Key words that came up during the focus groups of 32 residents on why the public finds the library valuable included: "serves as a community center," "low cost meeting space," "helpful staff," "offers up-to-date technology," and "comprehensive collection and resources." See figure 1.

Figure 1

What would you like patrons to think or feel about our library as we move into the future?



- Place to Gather/Destination
- Great Resources
- Welcoming/Inviting
- Technologically Savvy
- Friendly
- Relevant/Current
- Information Center
- Helpful
- Good Customer Service
- One-of-a-Kind
- Knowledgeable

- The focus group was also asked if the library's marketing efforts were working. Some of the areas for improvements included a desire to have more e-mail reminders about upcoming programs and to feature more information about library services in the newspaper and in newsletters, instead of just events.
- Staff members were surveyed and the results showed that the top four emotions that the staff wanted people to feel about the library were as "a place to gather" or a "destination," "welcoming" or "inviting," "having great resources," and "technologically savvy." These words fit in with all of the emotions identified by patrons and helped determine the tagline used.
- Using results from a previous survey (2011) of 284 patrons and ongoing surveys taken at programs that ask how attendees learned about the event, our efforts were focused on improving the most effective marketing tools for the community: posters, local newspaper articles, library Website, electronic ads, and newsletter.

As part of the planning process, measurable objectives were set: 1.) To increase the number of library card holders, 2.) To increase circulation and program attendance, and 3.) To increase usage of our Website, databases, e-Books, wireless connections, and music downloads.

Implementation and Creativity:

After looking at the results from the focus groups, surveys, and other research, a committee of the library's department heads started on the process of creating the new brand, including a new tagline and logo.

Wells County Public Library Tagline:

• After narrowing down the selections to about six possible taglines the final one selected by the committee was “Your Go-To Spot...” The tagline was chosen for its versatility, succinctness, and the value it conveyed. It gave us the option to highlight our services, people, and everything else in a unique way, by changing what the library is the “Go-To” spot for.



• The tagline clearly portrayed the four key components that came up in our research about the value of the library: a place to gather (spot), welcoming (your), great resources (the ability to customize for all of our services), and technologically savvy (using a contemporary and more slang term “go-to” allowed the library to convey this and we also had the ability to customize the tagline to feature all of our technology services).

Wells County Public Library Logo:

- Featured four main colors that are used throughout our marketing materials.
- Multiple logos were created. The team wanted to have an easily recognizable marketing “concept” more than a static logo. For that reason, the main logo could be flipped in either direction and all of their materials played on the circle or “spot” theme. The team also created a separate logo for teens, kids, and adults. Each one received a featured color from the main logo.
- Shortening the Wells County Public Library to use the initials WCPL would make it easier to remember and be more identifiable, especially when viewed from a distance. It also appealed to a younger target audience.

Figure 2



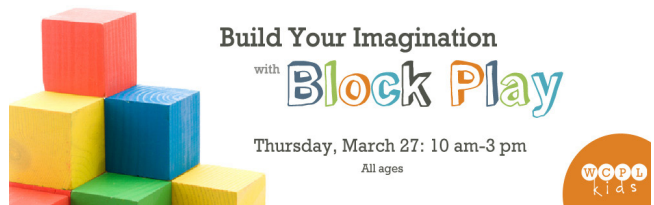
Once the concept was in place, the team worked on creating new designs of all of the library’s marketing materials: online, posters, library newsletters, street banners (see figure 2), and more. The logos, marketing materials, and Website were all designed in-house by staff members.

The bulk of the expense of the campaign was for 110 street banners and staff shirts (which were funded by the Friends of the Library). They purchased the rights to use a few

stock illustrations and photographs, but the majority of the photographs used were taken by staff. Additional costs were tablecloths, magnets, a newspaper ad, posters, and Website

add-ons. Staff time and in-house printing costs did not increase.

To help patrons easily identify what age a program is for, the children’s, teen, and adult departments were assigned a “color” from the main WCPL logo to be used in the library’s marketing materials. For program posters and ads, a circle of this color is placed in the bottom corner, so it’s easy to spot the age range of a program based on color alone, even from a distance on the digital signs. Programs for all ages feature the main logo. All of the ads also feature a majority of the same fonts, for a uniform look.



One of the primary projects included updating the library Website (www.wellscolibrary.org). To help clean up the Website, we organized all the information into four key categories: *services, books & media, news & events, and research*, while at the same time including links in the main menu to the children, Teen Zone, and My Library pages.

Each primary category received an easily recognizable icon to make it visually appealing and allow for easier navigation. More common words were used, such as “research” instead of “databases” and “find books, movies, music, & more!” instead of a link to the “online catalog,” which many patrons did not understand. A feature of our old site that the public continually commented on was the library’s rotating webpage ads, which advertise closings, programs, and services. Based on the success of these ads, the team gave the main focus of the home page to the webpage ads and made them even more prominent.

Redesigning everything also allowed for featuring library patrons more prominently in all of the library’s marketing efforts. “In the Spotlight” was created for the newsletter and in displays to feature favorite books and fun information about patrons.

A coordinated effort with the *Bluffton News Banner* allowed for the newspaper to feature stories of different patrons and how the library has become their “Go-To” spot. For example, a truck driver said that the library is his “Go-To for Audio-books” so that he can listen while driving. Additionally, a

family which homeschools their children uses the library as a “Go-To for Children’s Resources,” so this successful input from patrons was kicked off during National Library Week. The library continues to feature people on the Website and in the library newsletter.

Evaluation:

The main goal of the rebranding project was to create an easily recognizable concept that could be used across all of the library’s marketing efforts. Using the tagline “Your Go-To Spot...” allowed library staff to unify everything with a visual circle theme throughout their marketing. The library has received a lot of positive personal feedback regarding the new marketing materials and logo, both from patrons, city officials, and awards committees. The publication relations campaign and rebranding won the 2013 *Sara Laughlin Marketing Award* from the Indiana Library Federation and one of the 2014 *John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Awards* provided by the H.W. Wilson Foundation, the American Library Association, and EBSCO.

During the planning phase, the team set objectives of increasing library card holders, circulation, program attendance, and usage in digital resources, including the library’s Website, databases, e-Books, wireless connections, and music downloads. During 2013, the Wells County Public Library:

- Issued 985 new library cards, which was a 21 percent increase from 2012 and brought the percentage of card holders in our county to 71 percent.
- Saw a 40 percent increase in total circulation of all materials from the previous year. One of the biggest increases in circulation were in electronic audiobooks (39 percent increase) and e-Books (52 percent increase), which we focused heavily on promoting by highlighting the library as a “Go-To for Technology” and a “Go-To for e-Books.”
- There was also a 153 percent increase in database searches over the previous year, which was the result of promoting these resources more and also making them easier to find on a streamlined and redesigned Website.
- In the first month the new Website received a 36 percent increase in total views from the previous month. In two months, the total page loads also increased by 38 percent. Also, in an effort to become more personable and relatable to the public, staff members have the ability to add information and create posts about various topics of interest on the Website. More than half of the library’s Website visitors go on to read the posts made by staff.
- One of the largest increases was in wireless connections, which increased by more than 417 percent in 2013 over 2012. This was expected because area schools now have a program where every student receives an iPad, but the enormous increase shows our campaign worked in getting these students in

the doors of the library.

- Our overall programming attendance did not increase significantly at only 5 percent, but there was a large jump in attendance by young adults in grades 7-12. That increase in 2013 was about 98 percent more when compared to the previous year.

The library’s team feels the “Go-To Spot” rebranding and campaign was very successful in creating a more unified look and getting more exposure in the community. One area for improvement is to increase program attendance for all ages by offering more “Go-To” events presented by local residents. Two events were held during kick-off week, and the library staff would like to offer more frequent events for opportunities to tie in program topics (such as pottery, finance, and more) with book displays. They would further highlight the presenters and promote what the library is for the presenters’ “Go-To” in the newspaper. Another goal the team noted is to use more teens in marketing.

Bio:

Emily Marshall is the Community Relations Manager at the Wells County Public Library and oversees the library’s marketing and public relations. After earning degrees in advertising and public relations, Emily worked in public relations and event planning for several non-profit organizations and corporations. She transitioned into library marketing eight years ago and has held numerous positions at libraries in Tennessee, Michigan, and Indiana. Since being at WCPL, she has worked on creating a new image and brand for the library to improve communications with patrons and the entire community.

