



**Creating Groupies,
or,
Showing the Information-Hungry People
Within Your Organization That They
Desperately Need You**

Mary Ellen Bates
Bates Information Services, Inc.
mbates@BatesInfo.com
303.772.7095
800.820.2104

Showing Your Clients Why They Should Care

First, let's just admit that marketing library/information services can be a challenge. We have to deal with the IAOTWFF (It's All On The Web For Free) syndrome. So, how can we tell our clients about what we do in a way that engages them?

Things to think about first

- Whether you like it or not, you're *selling a service*. And you've got competition – Google, the guy down the hall, Yahoo! Answers, Wikipedia, and “I can find it myself”.
- You have “clients” or “customers”, not just “patrons”. Whether or not they're paying you directly, they are the people who will advocate for your budget.
- Get your face out there in front of your clients. How do you do that? Look at the org chart and figure out who is responsible for large groups of people who you think need information. Large-account sales people. The marketing department. Investor Relations. Strategic Planning. Competitive Intelligence. Customer Service. Product Development. You get the idea.
- Likewise, find the people for whom information translates directly into revenue for your organization.

Preparing a one-hour training workshop (that is, get in their faces)

How do you start? Have an informal interview (over lunch, say, on the library's dime) with someone in each of your targeted areas – ideally someone who already uses the library.

Some of the questions to get answered are:

- When do people in your group need to find information? At what stage in their work?
- Would their jobs be easier if they gathered information earlier in the process?
- Where do you go for information?
- Where else?
- What do you do when you can't find the information you need?
- What are a couple of examples of situations in which you couldn't find an answer?

- Are there any political reasons why your group wouldn't use the library more? (budget? their own research staff?)
- How receptive would your group be to having someone come in and show them how to find information more efficiently? (Remember – there are no right answers to these questions, and your interview is *not* an opportunity to pitch the library. You are merely in information-gathering mode.)

Take the information you have gleaned, review the prior research work the library has done for that department or group, and brainstorm with the rest of the library staff. What seem to be their most difficult information needs? What on-going information needs do they have? How resistant to or enthusiastic about the library are they now?

Now, here's the hard part. Develop a one-hour session for brown-bag lunches or during a regularly-scheduled meeting, which you will customize for each group, showing them how to find the really good stuff on the web. Describe the session as "How to Find the Information That Google Can't Find But Our Competitors Probably Know Already" (or something similarly provocative). The idea is to implant a teeny amount of fear in them, to remind them that Google isn't the answer to all their information needs, and that **you** can help them find what they need more effectively.

Have real-life examples that are relevant to the group you are addressing. A session could include the following:

- Use Jux2, TwinGine, or ranking.thumbshots.com to demonstrate the *lack* of overlap among search engines
- Show the advanced search options for three search engines
- Show them three web-based databases or other specialized web resources appropriate for this group. Make sure they understand that the content within these databases is probably not spidered by a search engine.
- Show them some blog and podcast search engines.
- Explain what RSS is and how they can read RSS feeds.

PowerPoint can be a helpful way to present this material. Some adults learn by listening, others by reading – having PowerPoint slides makes it easier for them to focus on what you are saying.

At the end, tell them that, in addition to what you just showed them, you *also* have access to {these value-added databases and specialized services}. Would they like to have access to these as well as the web?

Building Loyalty

Be sure you have a handout to leave with your workshop attendees. Include links to all the sites you demonstrated, and a copy of the PowerPoint slides. Be sure the library's contact information is prominently displayed.

Offer to set up personalized RSS feeds for any attendee who asks. Stress that having an information professional do this ensures that only the most reliable sources are being monitored.

Build customized pages with annotated links to the best, most authoritative web sites for your organization's industry or subject area. You can build it with Furl.net or you can create a specialized web search that only goes to the sites you think are best, with Rollyo.com or Gigablast's Custom Topic Search. Whatever you use, the point is to establish yourself as providing the "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" on the best of the web. Be sure to promote that library web page whenever you give a presentation.

Offer to develop similar web pages specifically for the group you're targeting. What specialized needs do they have that would not be of much interest to the rest of the organization? One way you can collect that information is to solicit it during the workshop. Ask them to write down their three most important web sites that are specific to their job (if they don't remember the URL, just get a good description of the site... you can probably find it yourself later). Use these sites as a starting point for a group-specific

web resources page.

Contact your Human Resources office and get added to their new-employee orientation. In addition to showing the new hires the library and the online services you provide, give them a modified version of the leave-behind you use for the workshops. This is yet another reminder to new employees that the library supports them in their work.

The loyalty you gain from all these efforts will go a long way toward building library groupies!

Making It Happen

- You can build this program yourself.
- You can work with your in-house training department.
- You can bring Mary Ellen Bates in to help you meet your objectives of expanding library services and developing wildly-enthusiastic library advocates throughout your organization.

Mary Ellen Bates
Bates Information Services, Inc.
8494 Boulder Hills Dr.
Longmont, CO 80503
303.772.7095 or 800.820.2104
mbates@BatesInfo.com
www.BatesInfo.com