

## PR Rx Toolkit Section III: The Public

### **Introduction**

Building a strong connection to the public involves activities that both draw the public to the library and that help promote the library out in public forums away from the library. Most library personnel and library supporters are most familiar with public relations activities that are conducted on a recurring basis: newsletters and publications, regularly scheduled events (such as book discussions and other library programs), and the traditional annual book sale. These activities are essential in fulfilling a library's mission and should serve as the basis for creating additional and innovative ways of reaching out to communities and stakeholder groups.

This section focuses on two primary means for reaching your public: planning special events and creating a speaker's bureau. The key difference with these public relations strategies is that the content of these efforts are customized for a particular outcome and therefore have the potential to have a great impact in delivering a particular message. Furthermore, these public relations strategies involve interacting with the public outside of the framework of normal library work. These activities provide a wonderful opportunity to get the public thinking about the role of the library and the support needed to help libraries thrive.

## Planning Special Events

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All librarians are program planners and programs —of one type or another —are offered in all types of libraries. Typically programs are offered as part of a service such as children’s services summer programs, instruction programs for students, youth or young adult programs for school year after school events, curriculum-based programs for faculty, research content programs for clients, or adult programs for seniors and/or special populations – to name but a few types of programs.

While all of these programs have similar planning aspects, all planning aspects – plus many more – come to bear in planning for special events. How do special events differ from standard program planning? Special events are:

- Typically one-time events;
- Focused on a unique or specific purpose with specific outcomes; and,
- Are often more “intense” or “dramatic” as they are designed to attract attention, educate potential attendees, attendees, and press.

The critical elements of success relating to planning special events include the choice of the planning team, event goals, strategies and outcomes, event planning tools, event logistics, event marketing and public relations and event evaluation and post-event activities.

### **Planning Team**

Planning special events requires teams of planners working toward the bigger picture of the event and – as needed – smaller focus groups. Teams need diverse input, broad competencies, varied representation, and membership both internal and external to the organization. If in initial discussions special event attendees have been identified, planning teams should have representation from these groups as well. Specifically, planning team member considerations for inclusion typically include:

- Geographic representation, depending on scope of event
  - Across the community
  - Across the state
  - Across the country
- A mix and balance of knowledge and skills
  - Technological skills
  - Event content knowledge
  - Institutional knowledge

- Community knowledge
- Audience knowledge
- Marketing skills
- Public relations skills
- Planning/time management skills
- Representation from diverse employee groups
  - All levels of employees (managers, frontline)
  - All categories of employees (librarians, assistants, paraprofessionals)
  - Volunteers
  - Union/non-union
- Representation from diverse audience groups
  - Potential audience members
  - Won't attend but will support the event
  - Won't attend but need to be informed/aware
  - Won't attend but will see to it that others attend
  - Will attend, support during and after the event
- Consideration for team leader or co-leaders
  - Does the group need a leader or co-leaders?
  - External or internal leaders or co-leaders?
- Consideration for leaders of smaller focused planning groups or team sub-groups
- Consideration for non-team members to serve as team resource experts. (Need an expert and no one is available for team work or team meetings? Will they be a resource person?) These experts may include:
  - A marketing/PR expert
  - Someone to consult/manage the budget/fiscal responsibility
  - A Web expert
  - A photographer
- Balanced internal and external representation (organization vs. umbrella organization or ancillary groups such as Friends and Foundation)
- Representation from different “types” of organizations, such as:
  - Types of libraries
  - Types of partners or vendors; profit or non-profits
  - Types of community groups

### **Mission, Goals, Strategies and Outcomes**

Although an obvious statement is that the special event needs to follow the mission of the sponsoring organization, the reality is that the planning team needs to articulate HOW the

event matches the institution's mission and goals. This match should also extend to the design of event goals and strategies and might have to be integrated into the event public relations.

The event itself should have:

- A summary statement, paragraph or “sound bite” that describes what the event is and how it relates to the mission of the organization
- Event goals for event, team, subgroups/subteams (pre, event, post activities)
- Event outcomes for event, team, subgroups/subteams (pre, event, post activities)
- Team job description of activity and subgroup activities (pre, event, post activities)
- Team job descriptions for team leaders (pre, event, post activities)
- Team job descriptions for team members and others such as resource experts (pre, event, post activities)
- A marketing strategy (pre, event, post activities) (see section below)
- A public relations plan (pre, event, post activities) (see section below)
- Built-in evaluation elements to all documents (see section below)

## **Planning Tools**

### **Timeline**

Timelines should begin an extensive period of time prior to the event and continue through and after the event. Timelines should be designed with all group members present. Individual timelines should be created for all subgroups and event functions.

### **Benchmark/Supporting Content**

Supporting content should include benchmark data as well as examples of events that have had problems for “teachable moments.” Content outlining other successful events should be researched prior to the first meeting for generating ideas, and then group members and subgroups should continue to gather as needed. All ideas should be measured against the specific goals of the special event in question.

### **Checklist**

Checklists or “to do” lists should be used throughout the process and used to educate as well as track activities. Checklists should be designed to match timelines and checklists should be created by subgroups. All checklists should be retained for evaluation. While checklists are typically used for team business, “to do” lists might be created by team leaders and members as tools for preparing for and working through team meetings and event activities such as “the checklist for the meeting with a photographer or food/catering individual.”

### **Budget**

Budgets should include money available – both actual and in-kind, money generated by the event (if applicable) and pre, during and post expenses. Putting the budget together

“occurs” at the beginning of the event with an initial budget draft presented to the team, and subgroups should create budgets for activity areas. A budget report should be included on each agenda.

### **Communication List**

Communication elements include standardized agendas, note-taking forms, budget forms, letterhead and letters, emails and – of course, public relations content. Communication lists should also be created for all those involved in and contacted throughout the process. Audience members should be listed as well and as appropriate such as audience representatives or communication venues to reach those audience members such as electronic lists, organization newsletters, etc.

### **Logistics**

The basic logistical elements involved completing the event profiles. Profiles elements include:

1. Name/Theme/ Event Name/ Type of Event (example: rally, fundraiser, celebration, parade, fair, athletic events such as runs)
2. Event description
3. Event keynoter/speakers
4. Event alternate keynoter/speakers
5. Date
6. Alternate date (rain date)
7. Time
8. Location
9. Location use/structures (space area/size or size of building)
10. Location support/electricity/other utilities
  - Tables
  - Chairs
  - Tents
11. Event support/security/safety/health
  - Police
  - Fire
  - Portable toilets
  - Parking
  - Signage
  - Emergency plans
  - Health care professionals (EMS? nurses?)
  - Cleanup – during and post event
12. Audience/profile/special needs
13. Anticipated attendance – per activity
14. Anticipated attendance – daily
15. Anticipated attendance - total
16. Event planners/primary contact people

17. Event planners/subgroup contact people
18. Special issues
19. Special forms
20. Special permits
  - Permission to hold the event
  - Location permission
  - Transportation
  - Insurance
  - Food/alcohol
  - Waste

**Logistical questions include:**

1. Are streets going to be closed? When streets are closed for any radius around an event, traffic for miles around the event are affected related to parking, rerouting or turning traffic away from the event itself. What are the egress issues for fire and safety? What are the egress issues for area businesses, individuals and/or organizations such as churches and schools?
2. Is public transportation an issue with the event? Starting times? Access to the event itself?
3. Will food be served?
4. Will music be played? Are noise levels an issue? Types of music an issue? Will music impact audience behavior?
5. What are the crowd issues? Moving the crowd to and from the event? Moving the crowd around during the event? Moving special needs crowd members around? Are there ramps? Is parking readily available? Are TDD phones available? Do portable toilets accommodate special needs?
6. Are there any related events? Around the community? Before, during and contiguous to the event? Do any events affect or reduce or increase attendance at the event?
7. What are the permits needed? Do you need to meet with people to obtain permits or “goodwill” such as neighborhood groups? Can permits be completed online? Local, state and federal agencies require additional permitting? Some examples include the Health Department (food sales) State Alcohol Beverage Control (serve liquor) Transit Authorities (public transportation.) Examples (which may have budgetary impact for fees) include:
  - Special Event Permit Application
  - Informational Brochures

- Special Event Ordinance
- Fire Prevention
- Introduction or sponsorship support documents
- Sign requirements (onsite, offsite, egress signage for highways and pedestrian)
- Planning for alcohol at your special event
- Storm water concerns
- Sanitation and recycling
- Facility use applications
- Food preparation – cooking and/or serving (pre, during and cleanup)
- Alcohol permits (regular vendors, temporary “daily” sales...what type of license is needed? (Banquet, banquet special event, mixed beverage?)
- Sales permits (food, other)
- Police use (on duty, off duty)
- Proof of insurance (for pre, during and post activities) with – typically – million dollar liability for major events – cost based on risk levels but alcohol and pyrotechnics cost more
- Special events calendars for city, county, state, community, etc.
- Infrastructure support (larger tents, stages)
- Fireworks (explodes, rises into the air, moves across the ground or shoots projectiles into the air – legal or illegal in your area)
- Animals involved? Need special permits?

## **Marketing and Public Relations**

### **Marketing**

Marketing the event takes unique expertise, extensive content on the potential audience and event goals and strategies. Marketing information needed includes:

- Data on the event – content, goals
- Data on past successes and failures
- Data on the audience ...who are they, what do they attend, what’s “in it for them”
- What’s the message? What message will appeal to the audience?

### **Public Relations**

Designing and delivering publication relations takes unique expertise as well and includes advertising and publicity for all media and methods for reaching potential audience members (radio, television, web-based venues, newspapers, magazines, etc.)

Public relations information needed includes:

- Data on community, local, state, etc. communication venues in general
- Data on communication venues that have worked with this potential audience

- Content for media message including are you informing, educating or entertaining? Are you making people aware or delivering in-depth content and/or creating an ongoing base of support for future activities?
- Match of content to media/method

### **Evaluation/Post-Event Activities**

Evaluation should be pervasive throughout the process and should be present in event activity design, delivery and document retention. Evaluating should go beyond measurement of aggregate attendance, number of press pieces distributed or money spent or raised. Current evaluation should:

- Include measurable goals
- Include articulated strategies
- Include outcomes
- Be conducted as event planning moves along as well as immediately after AND for scheduled post times (timeline depends on goals)
- Include a method of evaluation for attendees and program planners and workers such as event volunteers
- Include the evaluation of program elements such as:
  - Did the communication plan work?
  - Did press received match the audience?
  - Did the intended audience attend? Get the message?
  - Did planning team members complete assignments? Who would you “ask back?”
  - Was budget reasonable? Meet needs?
  - What three things would you do the same next time?
  - What three things would you do differently the next time?

### **Giving Thanks**

Thanking is a critical part of making events successful and should be considered as a vital part of the communication process throughout event planning.

- Who needs to be thanked?
- What is the “thanking” timeline?
- Was everyone thanked in a timely fashion?
- Did the method of “thanking” match the individual or group? (example: emails are more informal thanks and shouldn’t be sponsor thank you’s)

A general rule of thumb is...you can’t thank too often or too much in the process of making special events successful!

# How to Set Up a Speakers Bureau

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## **What is a Speakers Bureau?**

A Speakers Bureau is a coordinated effort by an organization to distribute the organization's information, goals and needs. It is an ongoing public relations effort that includes research, strategic market planning, writing, coaching, promotion, monitoring, and evaluation.

## **What is the purpose of the Speakers Bureau?**

A speakers bureau should be considered a continuous program in a library or other non-profit organization aimed at:

- Educating the community about the library.
- Motivating people to donate money or other tangible goods or services.
- Explaining a special endeavor of the group.
- Announcing events or new projects.
- Training and recruiting new volunteers.
- Educating the organization's membership.

This public relations effort is also particularly helpful during a crisis, creating a face-to-face outlet to reach key audiences with the organization's messages as well as to dispel misconceptions about the critical situation.

Speakers can provide more personal contact than a news release that may or may not carry the planned message. The library representative also can respond to specific audience questions, permitting members of the community to hear the message without media interpretation and clarifying fine points.

## **Key Elements**

1. Selecting the Speakers
2. Selecting the Target Audiences
3. Selecting The Message

After recognizing how a speakers bureau is used, the library must determine what specific messages are appropriate to communicate. It is a good idea to begin by posing these questions:

1. What sets your library apart from others?
2. What are you trying to accomplish?
3. What is the primary reason for the bureau's existence (contributions, education, membership)?
4. Whom do you wish to reach?
5. What is the future of your agency?
6. What type of results do you expect?

### **Topics for Speakers**

The library should have a stock presentation explaining the mission of the organization, its program offering, who benefits from or uses these services, and the types of volunteer opportunities that exist. This approach clearly advises the community of the basics regarding the organization and lets an audience know how they can best support your library.

Another planned presentation is a speech focusing on the three or four major goals of the organization for the fiscal year. For example, is a new building being planned or a program introduced? Is there a special need for donor support or a major volunteer recruiting effort under way?

Perhaps an annual theme serves as a primary cause around which the whole organization is rallying. A theme-based speech frequently offers better audience recall, similar to consumers remembering an advertising campaign or slogan.

The library may have a set of topics it considers appropriate for any group. For example programs on developing a lifelong reading plan, or how to find books for particular interests, may have broad-based appeal.

Finally, the library may have a key message it wants to communicate to a particular demographic group, such as senior citizens or school children. In such a case, special presentations may be developed to target this group and utilize an approach applicable to this key audience.

Clearly, a speakers bureau needs several presentations. Because creating an effective program is a time-consuming task, topics must be prioritized. Speeches developed first should have the greatest relevance to the organization or be of the most value to achieving the nonprofit's goals.

### **Clarity of Purpose**

Each topic should be examined to determine the best approach for the individual speech. Is the purpose of the speech to persuade, to inform, or to entertain? Although the primary purpose of a speech is established, multiple purposes may result. For example, the primary goal of a speech may be to make the audience aware of your library, thus informing the audience of its existence and what it offers. The speech may also encourage an audience to donate to the charity's fund-raising efforts, thereby utilizing persuasion. It is even possible to use humorous anecdotes to make key points, providing entertainment value as well.

### **How to Support Your Speakers**

Train your spokespeople before important speeches. Supporting materials will be needed, not only to be professional, but to ensure that everyone speaking for your organization tells the same story.

Elements of a spokesperson package could include:

- Instructions on how to best use included materials.
- Speeches of varying length on a single, important subject.
- Speeches on additional topics.
- An outline of types of speech to use before different audiences.
- A backgrounder of brief answers to frequently asked questions regarding the organization, its products or issues it is facing.
- Anecdotes related to the speech subject, which could be used when making an informal presentation.
- If audio-visual materials are part of presentations, there should be a page describing equipment needs and necessary room accommodations.
- IBM and Macintosh compatible disks of the speeches. This will allow your speaker to print out the appropriate speech.
- Each speaker should have personalized biographies and photographs available to a program chair.

Excerpts included here from *Using Public Relations Strategies to Promote Your Nonprofit Organization* by Ruth Ellen Kinzey. See resource list at end of Section III.

## Resources

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### Recommended Reading for “Planning Special Events”

Allen, Judy. *Event Planning Ethics and Etiquette: A Principled Approach to the Business of Special Event Management*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2003.

Allen, Judy. *Event Planning: The Ultimate Guide to Successful Meetings, Corporate Events, Fundraising Galas, Conferences, Conventions, Incentives, and Other Special Events*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2000.

Armstrong, James S. *Planning Special Events*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 2001.

Levy, Barbara R. and Barbara H. Marion. *Successful Special Events: Planning, Hosting, and Evaluating*. Frederick, MD: Aspen Publishers, 1997.

Matthews, Doug. *How to Create Fantasies and Win Accolades: A Practical Guide to Planning Special Events*. British Columbia, Gear Six Creative, 2003

### Recommended Reading for “Creating a Speakers Bureau”

“Creating a Speakers Bureau.” *Public Relations Tactics* Vol. 4 Issue 10 (Oct 97): p10.

Kinzey, Ruth Ellen. *Using Public Relations Strategies to Promote Your Nonprofit Organization*. Haworth Press: August, 1999.

## Subsection Credits

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“Planning Special Events”: Julie Todaro, Dean of Library Services, Austin Community College

“Creating a Speakers Bureau”: Julie Todaro, Dean of Library Services, Austin Community College