

# Geek the Library: Impact and Outcomes

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# What is Geek the Library?



## geek<sub>VERB</sub>

1. To love, to enjoy, to celebrate, to have an intense passion for.
2. To express interest in.
3. To possess a large amount of knowledge in.
4. To promote.

[geekthelibrary.org](http://geekthelibrary.org)

### Geek the Library

is a community awareness campaign for U.S. public libraries that gets people talking about their passions – what they ‘geek’ – and provides an effective platform for libraries to educate and engage people about the immense value public libraries have for individuals and for communities.

# Why It Works

- Geek the Library **takes the library into the community**
- When libraries increase awareness, they **change behavior and perceptions**
- Results in **informed, passionate library supporters** (even if they are not library users) who drive change



## The Public Library: **A Vital Community Resource**

- ✓ **Valuable** We help improve childhood literacy and offer resources for educational success.
- ✓ **Critical** We provide access to job resources and programs to get people back to work.
- ✓ **Transformational** We help community members reeducate themselves, and start and grow small businesses.
- ✓ **Inspirational** We inspire community members to explore new interests, careers and educational opportunities.

If our resources and programs matter to you, talk to people you know about why we are important and why everyone plays a role in public library funding. Your voice will make a difference!

[geekthelibrary.org](http://geekthelibrary.org)

Brought to you by OCLC, a nonprofit library cooperative, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



# Campaign Overview

- The campaign was piloted for 9 months in 2009 & 2010
- Three supplemental grants: June 2010 through June 2015
- Participating libraries receive FREE resources
  - Dedicated support from a field manager
  - Printed materials including t-shirts, bags, posters, stickers, brochures, postcards, bookmarks, bumper stickers, banners and branded tableskirts
  - Campaign Management Center, an online site housing downloadable ads, logos, templates, artwork and tips to implement campaigns
- Umbrella campaign includes [www.geekthelibrary.org](http://www.geekthelibrary.org) and social media (Facebook, Twitter)
- 1,800+ participating locations in 48 states
  - The campaign has also been implemented in Switzerland, The Netherlands, Austria and Germany



# Success For Libraries Of All Sizes

## Smallest Participant:

- Southern District Library, Lost Creek, WV
- 1 branch
- Population: 496



## Largest Participant:

- Miami-Dade Public Library System, Miami, FL
- 49 branches and 2 book-mobiles
- Population: 2.5 million





# ORSImpact Presenters




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Affiliated Senior  
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**Mel Howlett**  
Research Analyst,  
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# Geek the Library Evaluation

Data Collection Round 2



ORSIMPACT.COM



# 3-Year GTL Evaluation – Data Collection Round 2

Data Collection Methods Collected July and August 2014	
Methods	Respondents
Pre/Post Survey	30 primary contacts
Staff survey	49 staff
Focus group	7 primary contacts

## About the libraries...

- About two-thirds serve communities with populations under 20K
- 85% are in rural areas
- Two-thirds had total campaign budgets less than \$500

## About the respondents...

- 75% of pre/post survey respondents were managers; 50% were library directors
- 87% of staff survey respondents had high involvement in campaign planning and/or implementation

# Libraries are very satisfied with Geek the Library

OCLC's support was described as "excellent" and important to successful implementation.

- 86% of staff reported a positive (34%) or very positive (52%) impression of the campaign

Campaign was well-received, and materials were professional; libraries felt proud and credible. Materials were personal, which drew people in.

- 84% would recommend implementing the campaign to their peers

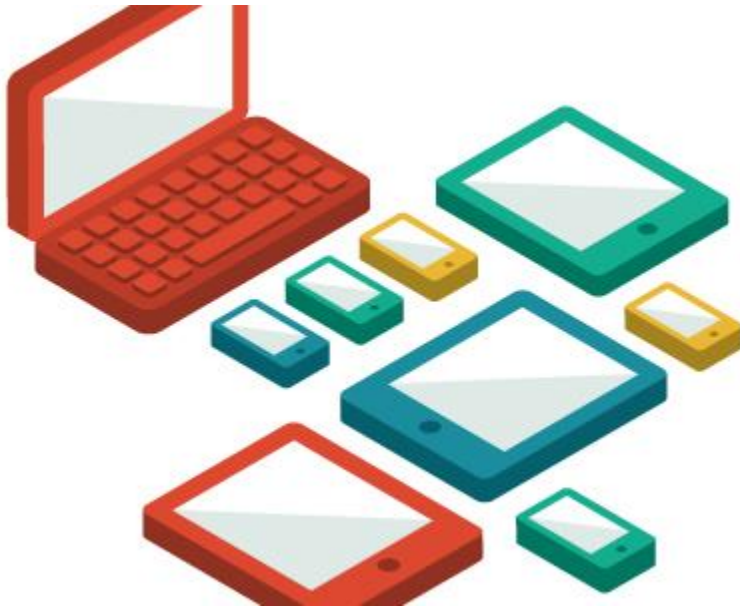
Staff were positive and appreciative re: OCLC's support - especially one-on-one support from field managers, and the Campaign Management Center.

"OCLC made it all very easy. That was the crux of the whole thing."

"The talking points handouts were a godsend. I could finally answer or explain the concrete value and contributions libraries make to the community...in ways that matter to [community groups]."

"The professional quality of the materials and the website [was brilliant]. Being able to use the materials and posters – it was incredible."

# Ways that libraries engaged community members in the Geek the Library Campaign



- Social/online media, esp. Facebook
- Local media
- Organized and hosted campaign events at the library and in the community
- Participated in community events, e.g. fairs, parades
- Posters
- Reached out to/partnered with business groups, schools and civic groups
- Reached out to political leaders, esp. mayors
- Created/shared materials specifically about library funding and library funding challenges

**100%**  
of libraries

**25%**  
of libraries



# Outcome 1: Increased advocacy capacity and activities

Weight of evidence indicates increased advocacy capacity among library leaders and staff:

- 67% of primary contacts reported improved marketing skills, 47% improved advocacy skills
- Post-campaign, primary contacts report increased engagement in activities that build support for the library, maintain positive public relations with all stakeholders and form strategic partnerships
- Post-campaign, primary contacts and staff reported more *frequently*, more *skillfully* and more *confidently* engaging in advocacy, PR and partnership development activities and that they plan to apply new skills in future work

# Outcome 1: Increased advocacy capacity and activities (cont'd)

## Take-aways for primary contacts and staff:

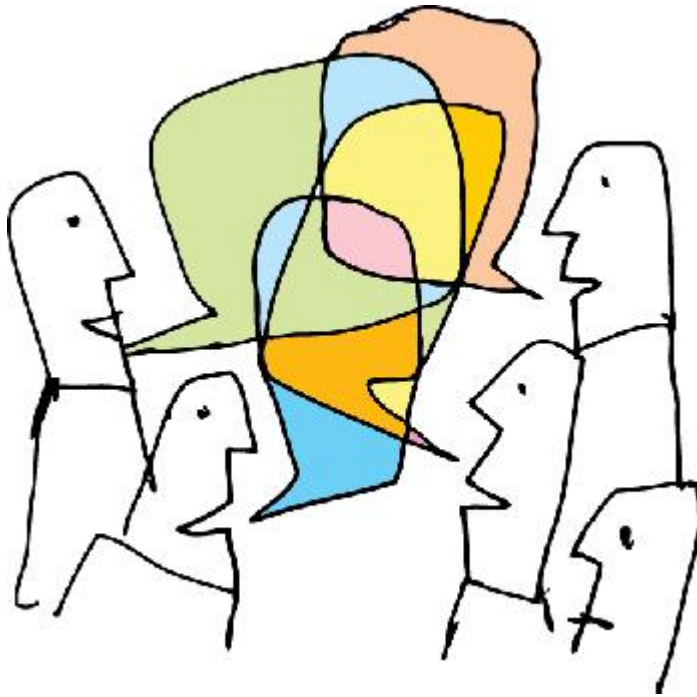
- Value in thinking “outside the box,” and “shifting the focus” of library PR and communications activities
- Importance of being visible and central in the community
- How to word PR and communications materials
  - More consistent and stronger messages
  - How to talk about library funding

“I was surprised how much the community didn’t know about the library. I thought we’d made them aware, but it was informative to see what happened when we shifted the focus from ‘here’s what the library does’ to ‘what are you into?’”

“It is not enough to set out flyers, or to post things on our website. To reach the public we have to be in the public eye. We have to be out talking to non-profit groups, businesses, at schools, festivals and county fairs. If we want the community to recognize the library as a community center, we have to be the center of the community.”

“Our staff now has a better understanding of how we are funded.”

# Outcome 2: Increased public support for libraries



- Primary contacts reported increased public awareness re: the value of the library (57%); staff reported an increased positive profile for the library (78%) and increased perceptions of the library as a central asset for the community (73%)
- Staff reported increased public understanding re: how the library is funded (66%) and primary contacts reported increased understanding among community members of their role in library funding (69%)
- Change in awareness about the library's value and public's role in library funding was seen as strongest among business groups; also evidence of positive changes among schools and local elected officials - especially mayors.



## Outcome 2: Increased public support for libraries (cont'd)

Evidence of the community's increased sense of value and support for the library:

- Increased social media and library website activity
- Increased public comments, greater community pride
- Increased library usage
- Library invited to be part of community events
- No strong opposition to public petitions for library funding



## Outcome 2: Increased public support for libraries (cont'd)

- Most primary contacts and staff reported strengthened existing connections with community groups (80%) and leaders (75%), and more new connections with community groups (75%) and leaders (59%)
- Most indicated more new champions (64%), and 81% felt that it was likely or very likely that champions would continue to take action on behalf of the library in the future



- Staff were about twice as likely to have observed/heard community members showing **support for the library generally** than **support for library funding specifically**

## Outcome 2: Increased public support for libraries (cont'd)

New/stronger connections reported with business associations, schools, civic groups (Rotary, Lions) and interest groups or clubs, mayors, local philanthropies

"[We now work more closely with the] Chamber of Commerce. We can send a flyer in an email to all Chamber members, and then they can all post the flyer in their businesses. Also on Facebook – we create messages or share Geek posts then Chamber members share those on their Facebook pages."

"The campaign helped us connect with schools in a stronger way. [Schools] started asking us to do more things with them. Now every year there is the option to sign up for a library card at registration. We are part of literacy night at the elementary school and a technology night at the high school. We wanted people to see us as relevant in a lot of ways, so being asked to be part of technology night was really wonderful for us. Some teachers have contacted us re: materials. There is more give and take."

"3-4 groups came to us to give us grants. That had never happened. Two of the groups did not have a relationship with the library prior. One did have a relationship, but nothing for 15 years or so. They reached out and said, 'Hey, we would like to help you out. We see that the exterior of the building needs help. We have grant money - write something, we can pretty much guarantee you will get it.'"



## Outcome 2: Increased public support for libraries (cont'd)



### Examples of actions taken by partners/champions

- People spoke out re: local petition about library funding
- School superintendent spoke on behalf of library support
- Photographer donated time to do Geek photos
- Teens spoke to community leaders re: the library
- Patrons participated in community events, and were ambassadors on behalf of the library

# Outcome 3: Changes in library resources

There is some qualitative evidence of changes in library resources

“Upcoming vote re: \$25/year library use fee has lots of support, little opposition.”

“We were able to raise more funds in our fund raising campaign last year than ever before so I think more people do value the library understand their role.”

“Our school budget vote had the highest margin of approval this year because all three libraries in our school district spent a lot of time talking about our budget and how important their vote is....and what a great value they get for their tax dollars”

“Millage passed.”

# Additional learnings

Evidence of fatigue, and a sense that the campaign has a “shelf-life”

“Everyone was excited at first, but that dwindled over time. By the end it felt like a chore.”

“It felt like it was time for it to be over. People came in expecting the display so we replaced the photos with posters of 36 lakes in the region. It highlighted a local, unique thing. So we were continuing it in a little different way.”



# Additional learnings (cont'd)

## Characteristics of Strong, Effective Partners:

- Shared values
- Shared passions
- Trust

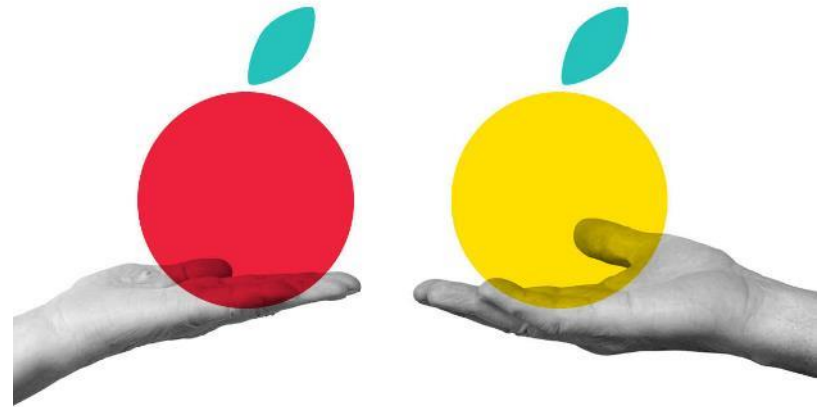


# Shared Values

“This is part of what is behind the natural partnership between libraries and schools.”

“We’re a community.”

“We’re stronger if we’re in it together”  
focus on promoting youth’s growth and development.”





# Shared Passions



“People responded to [the passion of the campaign] and we had some new partnerships that wouldn’t have come about otherwise.”

“The beekeeper association had a poster and would take it out with them to community events. They would say, ‘If you want to know what we do, go to the library to find out.’ They even started holding events at the library for us to give info about what they do.”

“Teens responded to the passion inherent in GTL - they came to us, they wanted to be involved with supporting the library.”

“This campaign resonated because it was all about ‘what are you passionate about? How can the library help you?’”

# Trust

“When we help people, when their lives are enriched then they believe in us... that does the work for us.”



# Sustaining new/stronger partnerships

Mixed opinions about the lasting nature of new/strengthened connections and partnerships, and recognition that time and resources are factors

“The campaign was like a package that landed in our lap. Now it is back to our work.”

“We are constantly being pulled into both the little and the big picture stuff. It is easy to get focused on the menial tasks. But while doing that, we need to have a plan for the bigger picture (including keeping good relationships with partners/champions). It is hard to do both and to find staff that understand that we do both of those things.”

“The bar has definitely been raised. There is a certain pressure that I feel. We need to do what we need to do, and spend time keeping those partnerships and relationships strong. We also need to stay fresh and contemporary as a library. I feel a bit stretched.”

ANY  
QUESTIONS  
?

# Geek Library Presenters



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Marketing PR Manager  
Herrick District Library,  
Michigan



**Ava Ehde**  
Library Services Manager,  
Administration  
Neighborhood Services  
Department, Manatee  
County Public Library  
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**Andy Schuck**  
Head of Youth Services  
William P. Faust Public  
Library of Westland,  
Michigan



# Reaching out and engaging community members



Herrick District Library, MI

# Forging effective partnerships

Wegeekyou!

Thank you for your support!



 geekthelibrary.org

Westland Public Library, MI

# Biggest “a-ha”



Herrick District Library, MI

# Newly improved marketing and advocacy skills



Manatee County Public Library System, FL



# “Ripple effect” in your community



Manatee County Public Library System, FL



# Advice for stronger local support



Herrick District Library, MI

# Questions About Geek?

Feel free to reach out any time with a question:  
[info@geekthelibrary.org](mailto:info@geekthelibrary.org)

