

*San Francisco Daily Journal, 3/18/99, p. 18.
Posted with permission of the Daily Journal.
This file cannot be downloaded from this page.*

Celebrate National Library Week!

by Donna S. Williams, Law Librarian

Well, it's almost here! National Library Week is from April 11 - 17, 1999. Have you decided how to celebrate this great event in your library? There are so many possibilities: raffles, contests, training events, decorating (yes, decorating). The key is to get your users to become aware of how grand the library is (no material how big or small), and all the services that are offered, including hard copies, computers and all the various mediums we deal with!

I will give you some tricks of the trade that I have used in the last ten years. I love getting all of the employees in my institution involved, even if I don't serve them directly. I want to celebrate "libraries" in general and believe in the ripple effect!

I start to prime my users in February and March. I publish a monthly newsletter and put in a blurb to remind everyone about the upcoming event. On Monday of National Library Week I send out a list of events for the week with a little something attached to the flyer such as a National Library Week pencil, pen, balloon or button! I wear a National Library Week button each day and make sure that our guard /receptionist wears it too. (Some of my users wear it throughout the year!) Also, I use the newsletter to publish an article in April that explains what it takes to actually run the library. We all know that many users have no clue about ALL we do and it's our job to educate them. What better opportunity than during National Library Week. In one column I compared the library to a business. Most people can relate to that, but be creative and try to reach whoever your users are.

In my newsletter, I advertise the "Annual Library Raffle" at least one month in advance. I like to capture their attention by putting something to the effect of, "What prize will you win this year?" You ask "What exactly do you raffle?" Well, we all go to trade shows where we get some very cool stuff like flashlights, mugs, paperweights, bags, mousepads, and kaleidoscopes. I save this stuff up all year and raffle it off during National Library Week! It's so much fun and the anticipation of the big raffle builds for weeks!

I put a container in my library starting on the Monday of National Library Week for users to sign up and drop their names in, only once, for a chance to win a fabulous prize. Then on Thursday of that week, we have the drawing. I usually get one of our Justices to pick the first name and the picked person to draw the next name and so on. If you get one of the "higher ups" involved in the raffle, you'll have great success!

Who can pass up a contest? Not in the competitive environment we all work in. Take advantage of that! One year I had a "Name the Library Newsletter" contest. The incentive prize was a nice potted plant for the winner's office. I made up rules and ended up with the clever name of "The Sixth Sense." Since I'm at the California Court of Appeal, Sixth Appellate District, I was delighted and honored to choose that name out of the top five. I actually received over twenty entries. You could also have a fact sheet to fill out, or even a "treasure hunt" of various materials using print and online sources. Try to keep it simple --

after all, this is a fun event, at work, and you want to try to target everyone in your institution.

"If there is food, they will come." How true! Each day I keep a steady supply of popcorn, pretzels, candy, etc. It's such a small expense and people really get a kick that I supply food in the library every day of National Library Week. Curiosity will force them to come into the library just to check out what goodies you have!

Plan on one or more events during the week. I try to schedule the Lexis and Westlaw training during that week. Internet training has been very successful in the last few years and I tailor the training to users' specific needs and always start out with some topic they are interested in. I also offer library and computer tours to all the various departments in my institution. Other ideas for training could be: legislative histories, an overview of services you provide, or a quick overview of some of your favorite reference materials. Finally, the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) has "Legal Research Teach-In" packets available, one kit per institute at no charge. They are distributed by West Group. Call 800-854-1597 to order your packet.

Next, decorate your library! You may think this is silly, but people get a smile out of it. We are in such a serious profession that seeing streamers in the library is just so silly that it lightens the mood just a bit. I don't go overboard or get too elaborate. I hang streamers at all the entrances into the library and into my office, of course. I also put up signs on the doors explaining that it's "National Library Week," in case we have visitors who are wondering what the heck is going on! Balloons are also a lot of fun and I know that Demco sells "National Library Week" balloons. One year I put up balloons and had such an overwhelming response that everyone wanted to take home the balloons to their loved ones!

Finally, HAVE FUN! Help your users celebrate National Library Week! It's such a great opportunity to sell yourself, your library and the institution of libraries in general! Seize the week and ENJOY! Even if you just do one little thing for the week, it's more than you did before and that's the whole point!

Donna S. Williams, Law Librarian
NOCALL Public Relations Committee
California Court of Appeal
Sixth Appellate District
San Jose, CA
email: donna.williams@jud.ca.gov

Copyright 1999 by Daily Journal. Reprinted with permission.