

Database Promotion at the Intersection of Electronic Resource Management and Outreach

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During the electronic resource management cycle, library staff review, acquire, evaluate, and deactivate databases based on a number of factors that include usage statistics, collection development decisions, and budgetary factors. One aspect of electronic resource management that has increased in the Government Information and Library Services division is our promotion of new, updated, or existing databases to our state employee users.

This article discusses a pilot project designed to promote the use of the Safari database (now known as O'Reilly). It shares the steps we took to plan and implement outreach activities focused on the database, along with how we created goals and measures to evaluate and assess the success of the promotion.

After the pilot database promotion, we gained experience and information to design additional database promotions, which has helped us improve our communications and outreach to state employees.

Electronic Resource Management Cycle

Database promotion often occurs, as part of marketing and branding, during the implementation phase of electronic resource management. Activities may include training, developing handouts, communications, and more. These promotional activities continue beyond the first phase of introducing databases to our users. Database marketing and outreach plans also help libraries remind our users about existing and updated databases (Emery & Stone, 2013; Emery, Stone, & McCracken, 2020).

Safari September Background

The Government Information and Library Services (Government Services) division held a database promotion called Safari September in September 2018. The idea for the promotion grew out of a recommendation from a comparative evaluation of eBook databases, which determined that one of the databases would need to be canceled. Our users mostly accessed the canceled eBook database, Books24x7, for technology and business topics and the evalu-



ation report verified that the Safari database would not only meet those same disciplinary needs, but it covered more topics, particularly with a growth in professional development and soft skills training. The Safari database also provided materials in more formats: eBooks, live online training, learning modules for asynchronous training, video-based case studies, videos, and audiobooks.

Process

We developed a planning process to help us maintain a clear focus for the Safari September promotion. These were the five components:

1. gather a team,
2. select an audience,
3. establish goals,
4. create communication and marketing plans, and
5. determine success.

Gather a Team

Gathering a team for the database promotion allowed for the sharing of responsibilities, which decreased the workload for each member of the team. Also, more people involved in the process meant more ideas and fresh perspectives. This was especially true for colleagues who didn't normally work with outreach or databases.

For Safari September, we created an ad hoc team, which included six staff members who worked with electronic resources, web services, reference and instruction, outreach, cataloging, stacks coordination, training support, collection development, and project management. Many members of the team worked in multiple areas of the library. In addition to the ad hoc team, other staff members from the division volunteered to assist with specific activities throughout the promotion.

Select an Audience

Once we developed our team, we decided who we wanted our promotion to reach. We reviewed our users, stakeholders, collaborators, and partners, and considered if we wanted to focus on particular groups of users. Then, we determined who our potential users would be.

We arrived at four main categories of users, at both broad and narrow levels:

1. current library users (state agency employees),
2. Books24x7 users (to share information about Safari as an alternative to Books24x7),
3. state employees who would likely find topics in Safari useful for their work (technology, business, management, professional development, and soft skills), and
4. potential library users.

We also knew we would need to consider these user groups according to how they accessed the library—both online and in-person.



Establish Goals

As part of the planning process, we set the following six goals for Safari September:

1. promote the Safari database,
2. provide information about Safari as an alternative for Books24x7,
3. include information about Safari in communications with state agencies,
4. send all giveaways to participants,
5. increase the number of new registered Safari users (at least 150 new Safari users, which was three times the typical monthly new registrant statistic when providing training), and
6. see increased and steady growth in usage statistics.

While some of our goals were transactional, such as completing a specific task, others were measurable, such as reaching a specific target. We designed the goals to focus on what we wanted to achieve, which was an increased awareness and use of the Safari database, while also serving as a foundation for our communication and marketing plans.

Create Communication and Marketing Plans

Database promotion is a combination of communication and marketing. As part of the brainstorming process of this phase, we asked ourselves the following questions about our outreach and communication systems:

- What systems did we already have in place?
- What communications or systems could we leverage?
- Were there opportunities to pilot new outreach or communication ideas?
- What were some surprising ways to reach out?
- How would we communicate with our users—in-person, online, or both?

We wanted to provide options for in-person and online communication to reach as many state employees as possible, regardless of geographic location. This is especially important for state employees because their work locations are spread throughout Oregon in urban and rural areas.

EXISTING COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS. For our existing communications systems, we used our division newsletter, eClips blog, and LibGuides. Our division newsletter is a bimonthly email sent to all library account holders. It includes information about upcoming trainings, updates to library services, database news, Oregon Government Publications information, and more. For Safari September, we provided information about promotional activities and the Safari database. eClips is an online news clipping blog focused on Oregon state government, such as state agencies or the state legislature, that is available for anyone to subscribe. An accompanying email goes out Monday through Friday mornings with the top 30 news clippings. For Safari September, we posted trivia questions twice a week, which required users to explore Safari in order to find the answers. LibGuides is a library-focused content management system. The Government Services division had existing LibGuides to support online trainings or provide subject-specific curated information. For Safari September, we adapted the Safari database LibGuide, adding a section for information about the Safari September promotion, including the eClips trivia questions and answers, virtual bingo cards, and more.



Safari: Review and Introduction

Learn about all the resources available from Safari through the State Library.

About Safari

>> Safari September <<

Training Opportunities

Learner Quiz

Bingo

Stumpers

Account Registration

Settings & Features

Playlists

Ebooks, Training, Videos, etc.

Questions or Comments?

Safari September

Safari September is our promotional event to share information about the [Safari database](#). During the month of September, the State Library of Oregon will hold a variety of activities to encourage exploration and use of Safari.



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Activities

In Person:

- [Diversity Conference](#) = information at the State Library of Oregon exhibit tables
- Come to the Watering Hole = visit with us at capitol mall area cafeterias
- Training Opportunities = come to an [Introduction to Safari class](#) at the State Library

Online:

- Communications = look for online updates and communications in our newsletter, along with emails from the embedded librarians
- [Bingo](#) = explore Safari by completing squares in our bingo challenge
- [Safari September Stumpers](#) = keep an eye out for trivia questions in our [eClips](#) service
- Training Opportunities = join us online for an [Introduction to Safari class](#)

Schedule

Safari September Schedule

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
3 [Labor Day Holiday]	4	5 Introduction to Safari (online) @ 10:00am	6	7
Safari September Bingo & Safari September Stumpers				
10	11	12 Diversity Conference (exhibit table)	13 Diversity Conference (exhibit table)	14
Safari September Bingo & Safari September Stumpers				
17 Come to the Watering Hole 11:30am-1:30pm Labor & Industries Barbara Roberts (DHS)	18 Introduction to Safari (State Library, Rm 103) @ 11:00am	19 Come to the Watering Hole 11:30am-1:30pm Public Service Bldg	20 Introduction to Safari (State Library, Rm 103) @ 2:00pm	21
Safari September Bingo & Safari September Stumpers				
24	25	26	27 Introduction to Safari (online) @ 2:00pm	28
Safari September Bingo & Safari September Stumpers				

The Safari September section of the Safari: Review and Introduction LibGuide.



EXISTING ACTIVITIES. We also adjusted a couple of our existing activities—library trainings and a conference for state employees. The Government Services division typically offers four trainings per month, which includes two introductory trainings and two special topics trainings. For Safari September, we added two online and two in-person trainings focused on the Safari database. The State of Oregon usually holds a Statewide Diversity and Inclusion Conference for all state employees every year in September. The State Library of Oregon has a table at the conference to share information about services from our divisions, and in 2018, we used a corner of our table to display information about Safari September. We provided handouts with information about upcoming trainings and how to create an account, an account registration sign-up sheet, and a prize drawing for giveaways.

PILOT NEW OUTREACH OR COMMUNICATION IDEAS. A new idea that we explored and implemented was to visit the cafeterias in three state agency buildings at the Capitol Mall in Salem. We called these visits “Come to the Watering Hole” as an extension of our safari imagery. Two library staff members set up tables for two hours during the average lunch period, and each team had a box with all of the materials needed—handouts and brochures, a container for prize drawing slips, account registration forms, pens, signs, and more. Afterward, the team brought back registration sheets with new user information, business cards, and completed drawing slips.

DEVELOP PLAN AND SCHEDULE. We used our promotion goals and communication systems to develop a plan and schedule. In August 2018, the team came together. Different team members took the lead for the activities or communication methods, and we completed our promotional handouts and brochures. We also provided a digital packet for librarians to share with professional development contacts at state agencies. At the end of the month, we held an internal promotion for Government Services staff, which we called our Safari Bootcamp. The Safari Bootcamp was a modified training session to share information about both the Safari database and the Safari September promotion.

In September 2018, we had online activities throughout the month, including eClips trivia questions (twice a week) and virtual bingo. We offered four Safari database trainings at different times and in different formats, both online and in-person, during three of the four weeks. Our newsletter went out to all library users at the beginning of the second week, and we shared information about Safari September at the Statewide Diversity and Inclusion Conference at the end of the second week. The Come to the Watering Hole cafeteria promotions occurred at state agency buildings during the third week.

Determine Success

After we completed the Safari September promotion, we determined its success by evaluating and assessing the measures and data associated with our goals. We gathered data related to the different activities—the number of new users, the number of people participating in trivia questions, the number of training attendees, comments received from participants, usage statistics, tracking where giveaways were sent, and other quantitative and qualitative measures.

Most of our goals were evaluative (answering *what*, *how*, and *how much* questions), but some of the data gave us the ability to start answering the *why* questions of assessment. This information came from both qualitative data, such as feedback from participants, and from combining elements of the usage statistics and registration data.



Evaluation and Assessment

Sometimes the terms *evaluation* and *assessment* are used interchangeably when describing the process of measuring goals. These are the meanings we used for the terms.

Evaluation determines the quality of what is being evaluated (for example, a test score). It's designed for documentation and provides a level of achievement. Evaluation answers *what*, *how*, and *how much* questions. It tells us where we are. A visual image is the "You are here" logo from location maps. This type of measure is used more often for electronic resource management when we consider usage statistics and similar data.

Assessment leverages measurements (for example, goals or objectives). It's designed for improvement and feedback and provides guidance for the future. Assessment answers *why* questions. It gives directions to where we want to be. A visual image is the comic strip *The Family Circus*, with the dotted line showing where Billy has traveled that day and pointing to where he has yet to go. This type of measure is used more often for outreach when we consider how to reach our users or which types of users would benefit the most from particular outreach activities.

PROMOTE THE SAFARI DATABASE. We successfully promoted the Safari database in multiple formats and activities throughout the entire month of September. Our registration drives gave us more data for this goal. At the Statewide Diversity and Inclusion Conference, 69 percent of state employees who completed the registration sheet became new library users and 90 percent became new Safari users. At the Come to the Watering Hole activities, 40 percent of state employees who completed the registration sheet became new library users and 75 percent became new Safari users.

PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT SAFARI AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR BOOKS24X7. We sent out multiple communications about Safari as an alternative database through emails, the division newsletter, and the eClips blog, with an average open rate of 22.77 percent for the emails. After we removed the link to Books24x7 from our database list, very few users contacted us regarding its absence.

INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT SAFARI IN COMMUNICATIONS WITH STATE AGENCIES. All librarians emailed their professional development contacts at state agencies with information about the Safari September promotion and the Safari database. Librarians sent emails to a total of 437 recipients from 77 state agencies, many of whom responded to the librarians. The word cloud displays the top 50 words from the compiled responses.

SEND ALL GIVEAWAYS TO PARTICIPANTS. We sent over 90 percent of the Safari database giveaways as prizes to participants of the various events, which we considered to be a success for this goal.



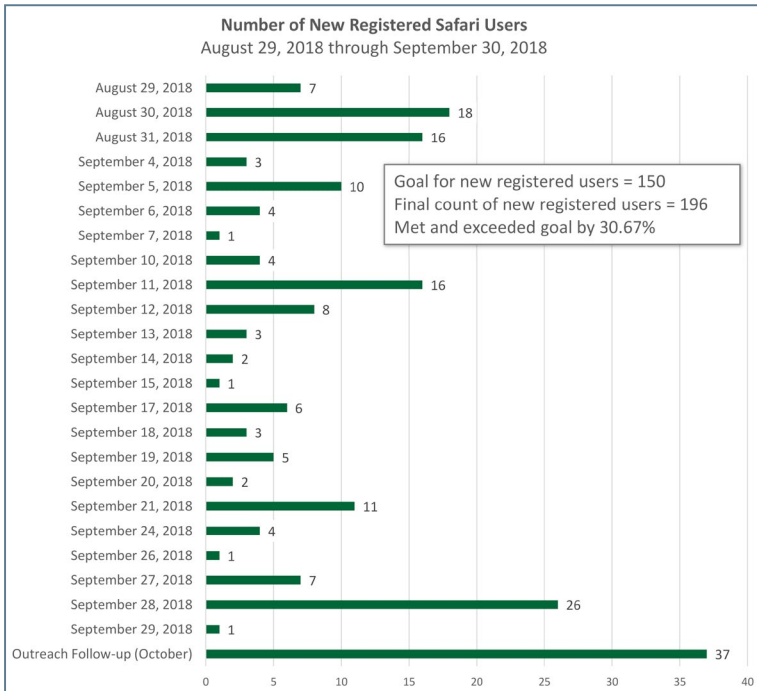


Word cloud of the top 50 words from compiled responses to email communications sent to state agencies.

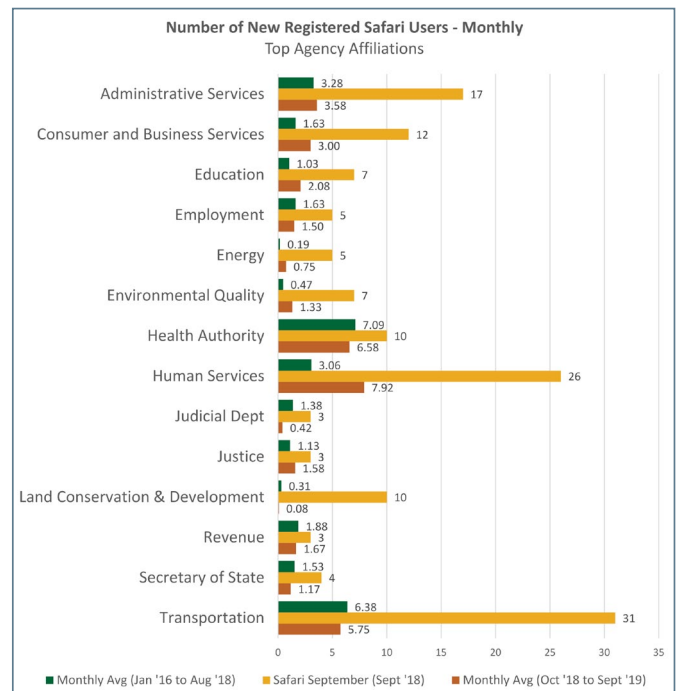
INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NEW REGISTERED SAFARI USERS. 196 state employees registered for new Safari accounts as a result of the Safari September promotion. This met and exceeded our goal of 150 new Safari users by 30.67 percent. We further analyzed the data to compare new registered users by agency and monthly average for both before and after the Safari September promotion, which provided assessment-level data. We could see how the promotion impacted new users per agency, which gave librarians more insight into their outreach efforts with those agencies.

SEE INCREASED AND STEADY GROWTH IN USAGE STATISTICS. The usage data showed a marked and clear increase in the number of searches in Safari. The number of downloads also increased, though not as much. More importantly, neither of those usage statistics dropped by a significant amount for the year following the promotion. While we saw some variation in the usage statistics, further analysis pointed to impacts from holidays, platform changes, and other external factors. Overall, we met this goal.





Number of new registered Safari users from the Safari September promotion.



Comparison of average monthly new registered Safari users by top agency affiliations, from before, during, and one year after Safari September.

Impact on Database Promotions

Safari September successfully promoted the Safari database to our users. And our experiences from Safari September impacted our database promotions for both targeted promotions and improvised outreach efforts.

Targeted Promotions

The Government Services division developed two targeted database promotions in 2019. The first promotion focused on databases that support on-demand learning for Microsoft Office programs. The team that led this promotion called it Microsoft May and focused activities on communication, registration drives, and training opportunities. Later that year, the Newspaper November promotion focused on databases that have newspaper content, along with additional library resources, such as microfilm, the eClips blog, and more. This promotion was then adapted to become an online training in our regular training schedule.


COVID-19 Outreach Responses

In late-March 2020, many state employees changed to telework environments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Government Services staff increased our reference and outreach efforts to ensure state employees continued to receive library resources and services no matter where they were located. As part of this effort, we increased promotions of the O'Reilly (formerly known as Safari) database and its growing collection of resources.



We highlighted information about O'Reilly in our newsletter, created content playlists in O'Reilly based on frequent questions and statewide training and communications, offered more scheduled online trainings for O'Reilly, and coordinated agency-specific O'Reilly trainings with one of the state agencies—teaching five online trainings with a total of 144 participants in May and June to support their training initiatives.

Conclusion

Government Services staff will continue to develop database promotions as part of electronic resource management and outreach programs. Outreach efforts are often an exchange of ideas between library staff and our users as we determine how best to meet our users' needs, and our database promotions will adapt as part of this iterative process. 

References

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