

NCRL Mail Order Library Marketing Plan

September 2006

The 2006-2007 MOL Marketing Plan outlines anticipated projects NCRL staff will undertake to market Mail Order services to new and existing users of the Mail Order Library. Projects may be undertaken in addition to those included in the plan and listed projects may be modified to enhance their effectiveness.

Situation Analysis:

Usage of the Mail Order Library declined from a high of approximately 203,000 items circulated in 2002 to only 123,606 in 2005. While the decline may be explained in part by service changes implemented in response to increased postal rates, the placement in branch libraries of some material once available only by mail, and a service interruption occasioned by a move to new quarters, there are other factors at play, as demonstrated by responses to a customer survey conducted in December 2005.

Current Mail Order customers expressed:

- confusion about orders with multiple due dates and a single return mail bag.
- a wish for more variety in the Mail Order collection.
- interest in larger and/or more frequent MOL catalogs.
- a desire for better on-line access to the Mail Order Library.

In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that many residents of the NCRL service area are either unaware of the Mail Order Library or believe home delivery of library materials is limited to residents of rural areas not served by a community library.

Goals and Outcomes:

Mail Order circulation will average 15,000 per month in 2007 (25% increase).*

Current customers will be retained.

New library customers will utilize the Mail Order Library.

* Revised from the original (July 2006) goal of 12,000 items per month.

* May 2006 circulation: 9,638. August 2006: 12,220.

Planned marketing activities for 2006:

❖ Mailing Measures

- Package a second mailing bag in any order that includes items with different return dates.
 - When: Already implemented.
 - By Whom: MOL Staff
- Include targeted reading/viewing/audio lists in most orders.
 - When: Already implemented.
 - By Whom: MOL Staff
- Create a “how to use” Mail Order half sheet to be included in every order.
 - When: Fall 2006
 - By Whom: MOL Supervisor and Staff
NCRL graphics department
- Develop a “new user” kit, including a copy of the print catalog, order cards, instructions for ordering by mail, e-mail, or on-line, and an explanation of return options (using the Merchandise Return label or dropping bags at any convenient NCRL location).
 - When: Fall/Winter 2006/7
 - By Whom: Mail Order Supervisor and Staff

❖ Branding

- Create a “Get it by Mail” icon featuring the shape and zipper of our mailing bags. Apply the icon to print and electronic communication tools system-wide.
 - When: Fall/Winter 2006/7
 - By Whom: NCRL graphics department

❖ Catalog Enhancements

- Add more variety to the Mail Order collection.
 - How: Involve more staff members in materials selection.
Purchase best-selling non-fiction titles in any available paperback format.
Include formats and genres for special audiences, e.g. board books, noir film, Christian fiction.
 - When: Already begun.
 - By Whom: Mail Order Supervisor and Staff

- Add NCRL's web address and toll-free telephone number to alternating pages of the print catalog.
 - When: September 2006 (for distribution beginning in 2007)
 - By Whom: NCRL graphics department
- Edit cover text to make it clearer that more titles are available from the Mail Order Library than those listed in a particular catalog.
 - When: September 2006 (for distribution beginning in 2007)
 - By Whom: NCRL graphics department
- Increase the number of pages in future editions of the print catalog.
 - When: January 2007
 - By Whom: NCRL graphics department

❖ Web Enhancements

- Provide Spanish and Russian language versions of the NCRL web page.
 - When: Fall 2006 (expenditure authorized September 2006)
 - By Whom: Professional translation service
- Change Mail Order Library tab to New from MOL or something similar.
 - When: Fall 2006
 - By Whom: NCRL webmaster
- Link the "Get it by mail" icon to an explanation of the Mail Order Library that both explains how the service works and makes clear that it is available to any area resident for whom scheduling or transportation issues make using a community library inconvenient or impossible.
 - When: Fall/Winter 2006/7
 - By Whom: NCRL webmaster

Associate Director Marilyn Neumiller

❖ Community Outreach

- Bring the team together to discuss goals and strategy and to ask for volunteers for in-house activities and partnership outreach.
 - When: October 5, 2006.
 - Who: MOL Supervisor and Staff

Associate Director Marilyn Neumiller
- Create a packet of material for community partners, including print catalogs, how-to information, "Get it by Mail" poster.
 - When: Fall/Winter 2006/7
 - By Whom: MOL Supervisor and Staff

NCRL graphics department

- Identify and contact potential partners: schools, home school groups, regional Library Media Association, senior organizations and residential facilities, Chambers of Commerce, churches, hospitals and clinics, day care associations, cultural and ethnic communities, etc.
 - When: Begin October 2006. Establish regular, scheduled contacts with at least one partner by January 2007.
 - By Whom: MOL Staff Volunteers

❖ Promotional Materials/Advertising

- Create a "Get it by Mail" poster.
 - When: Winter/Spring 2007
 - By Whom: NCRL graphics department
- Consider paid or sponsored advertising.
 - When: Spring 2007 (National Library Week, SRP)
 - By Whom: NCRL Administrative Team
MOL Supervisor
- Consider direct mail advertising (postcard series).
 - When: To mimic catalog mailing schedule.
 - By Whom: NCRL Administrative Team
MOL Supervisor
NCRL graphics department

❖ Evaluation:

- Monitor circulation.
 - When: Ongoing.
 - By Whom: Circulation Supervisor
MOL Supervisor
Associate Director Marilyn Neumiller
- Correlate circulation trends with the catalog mailing schedule and any other promotional activities.
 - When: Ongoing
 - By Whom: MOL Supervisor
Associate Director Marilyn Neumiller
- Add a brief customer survey to the "how to use" Mail Order information included with each order. Ask "How did you hear about the Mail Order Library?" and "What else would you like to see in the Mail Order collection?"
 - When: Fall/Winter 2006
 - By Whom: NCRL graphics department