Geek the library

An OCLC project adapted to the Netherlands 4 biggest cities

Ton van Vlimmeren
Public library of Utrecht

Metlib, Amsterdam May 2013
Is it possible for a large scale advocacy campaign to create an environment that sustains and increases funding for U.S. public libraries?
Library support is unrelated to using the library. **Support is an attitude.**
geek

- /ˈɡek/ verb

1. To love, to enjoy, to celebrate, to have an intense passion for.

2. To possess a large amount of knowledge in.

3. To promote.
What do you geek?
Everyone has something they are passionate about—something they 
geek. Maybe you geek football or hip hop. Maybe you are passionate 
about organic gardening, classic movies or volunteering. Or maybe 
you just geek the weather.

Whatever you geek, serious or fun, 
the public library supports you.

The public library inspires and empowers. With Internet access, 
knowledgeable librarians and local programs, it is an important 
resource for your community. And for millions of Americans, it is their 
only access to essential resources they need to improve their lives. For 
many, the library is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

The problem is, public libraries are struggling. 
Many libraries are cutting staff, programs and hours, and some are 
closing their doors forever. And even though usage has increased, 
funding is not sufficient to meet the need.

So please, share what you geek. Share what your library does for you 
and your community. And spread the word that your public library 
needs everyone’s support.
– Your library connects you with the things you care most about.
– Public libraries have value; they fill a vital role; they are for everyone.
– Funding for your library is at stake.
– Call to action: show your support for your library
Newspaper and radio

Online banners and paid search

Billboards

Inserts
How ‘geeking’ helps public library

By Alice Bennett

It’s easy to get caught up in day-to-day life and forget to pay attention to the things we love — the things we are passionate about.

This is especially true in a drug-ridden economy. But a new public awareness campaign provides some needed inspiration to explore what we are passionate about and support our public libraries.

Perhaps you’ve seen or heard something about it already — it is called “Geek the Library.” This community-based public awareness campaign introduces the word “geek” as a verb and defines it as having interest or passion for something. Essentially, the campaign wants us to celebrate what we geek — what we are passionate about — and remind us that the public library supports us.

It’s simple. Whether you are into motorcycles, football, or your public library — there is something to help you about it. It makes sense. And many greater Savannah libraries agree and are participating in this Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-funded initiative.

In the coming months, you may see the campaign in public ads, on billboards, radio and at local events.

The overall goal is to highlight the important role of our public libraries for individuals and communities and to raise awareness about the precarious funding struggles many libraries face. This is especially critical as more people are turning to libraries to search and apply for jobs. Doing what they do best, our libraries are evolving to meet these new community needs, but these extra efforts do not often translate into additional funds.

Did you know past public library funding comes from the local community? You may be surprised to learn that more than 80 percent of library dollars come from local sources.

And while the economy has put extra pressure on libraries since the community is tightening their belts, Georgia has historically lagged behind the national average for local library funding. In fact, according to the Georgia Public Library Network, Georgia ranks 31st in the nation for per capita local funding. We’ve got to work to get these numbers up.

Our public libraries are where people turn to when they need a new career, helping a child learn to read or providing exposure to a vast array of local, national and international resources, our public libraries are irreplaceable.

And, as the “Geek the Library” campaign suggests, we all play a role in keeping them around.

This awareness campaign makes it easy. And for the personal benefit of public library funding, it’s a lot of fun! The campaign invites you to “Geek the Library” (Savannahgeekthelibrary.org) and tell us why we geek, and watch videos about others geek, and you may even win a great information about our local libraries.

— Geek the Library, by Alice Bennett

What do you geek?

Alice Barnett: I am a huge fan of the local branch of the Oak Park Public Library in Chicago, Ill., and library resources.
I geek nice patrons!

I Geek reading with friends.
But did it work?

- Raising Awareness
- Changing Attitudes/Perceptions
- Driving Behavior/Intended Behavior
Tools & supports
- 80% would recommend the campaign
- 82% said supports were “just right”
- 87% achieved goals

Library capacity
- Library plays a central role (73%)
- Advocacy is important (73%)
- More outreach (69%)
- Motivation / excitement (67%)

Public perception
- Library plays a central role (73%)
- Library is “cool” and “exciting” (69%)
- More participation (60%)

Decision-maker awareness
- Interest in the library (40%)
- Library plays a central role (42%)

“I thought [the campaign] was amazing . . . . It was an amazing opportunity for the library to personalize what it is you love to do and make sure people realize that the library is there to help you with your personal interest.”

“Because the public responded so positively, it made staff feel appreciated and feel proud of the library and what we do. It breathed life into the library at a point where we really needed that.”

“It takes awhile to see changes in policymakers.”
Key issues

- Improve longterm relations with local government
- Reduce dependency on governmental funding
- Communicate public libraries’ great services & low pricing
- Coöperate in creating public awareness non-members
- Raise public participation, especially in age group 20-34.

Main challenge

How do we **reach & keep connected to** the under-represented age group 20-34, in a way that fits their demands & needs and at a time that library budgets are severely reduced?
Pilot Strategy

Carry out a communication campaign in 2013 in the G4 Cities in the Netherlands: Amsterdam, Den Haag, Rotterdam & Utrecht, using the proven means of the US campaign “Geek-the-library” and the outline of the German campaign plan.

Provide an easy for individual local library use marketing & communication toolbox which enables to address users, non-users, politicians, financial deciders in a sympathetic, measurable and efficient way.
YES! 

Because
A pilot is to find out if & how it works in a SMART way
G4’s relative low membership % and “big city issues”
Geek - the - library is different: **outside in** instead of **inside out**
Geek - the - library has proven effects in US

Get your geek on
geekthelibrary.org

What do you **geek**?
geekthelibrary.org
geekthelibrary.org

I Geek vampires
I Geek barbecue
I Geek football
I Geek hiphop
I Geek worms
What do you geek?
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