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NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK AT THE FRITO-LAY LIBRARY

By Suzanne M. Ogden

National Library Week is celebrated in a big way at the Frito-Lay Library. Since Frito-Lay is a very marketing-driven organization that excels at debuting new products during national sporting events as the Super Bowl, and March Madness, we took that practice as a model for our own advertising campaign, choosing National Library Week as the event.

Planning starts early

We began our serious 1996 campaign planning during Week 1 Period 1 (January 2 for those of you not on the Frito calendar), after all four of the staff members had a chance to peruse the National Library Week catalogs from all the vendors we could find. Orders for posters, mousepads, erasers, bookmarks, and note cards were placed; by March 18 the goodies began to arrive. A variety of books were purchased for daily prize drawings. Besides the Dallas MAPSCO, we bought a Texas gardening book, a table setting and recipe book from the Dallas Museum of Art, and books about investing, "real" ER stories, and a cartoon character and his dog dealing with life. Winners would choose the book they wanted.

Each staff member went through her stack of vendor goodies collected over the years. Logoed mugs, coasters, letter openers, pencil cups and assorted pens and pencils were added to the collection. The Grab Bag, our employee store, gave us about a dozen Frito-Lay cold drink koozies that looked like baseballs.

We eventually had enough prizes to conduct hourly drawings during our Open House on Thursday, Special Librarians Day. We also decided this year to put the touch on everyone in our department (Facilities and Corporate Services) for the Grand Prize. It was quite an interesting haul; a home fire extinguisher from Security, a leather portfolio from Information Services, and a 5 foot Bradford Pear tree from Facilities. Since these were so great, we decided to have 3 Grand Prizes.

Advertising was the next step. Instead of radio and television ads, which we think might be overkill, we advertised in the Headquarters Update (a monthly newsletter circulated at the Plano offices), and by sending flyers to all employees through the inter-office mail. We had two-color posters made for the kiosks located at all the building entrances, main intersections, inside the doors to the

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cafeteria, and outside of the Credit Union office. We promised tours, vendor demonstrations, daily prizes and food. We hung several new and colorful posters around the Library and in our hallway windows. Creative Library staff, with the assistance of our Image Processing Department, designed and printed all the signage that was needed. Our Conference Center Coordinator created a display of library items in the glass cases in the Didactic Gallery, located in the main hallway. The cases contained copies of new books, some of the classic food processing works, CD/ROM discs, posters, and even an old card catalog drawer upon which rested a sign directing our clients to the on-line card catalog. We have a very dynamic work force, by any definition of the word, and every year we find that we are introducing our Library and its services to a new, and changing audience. In 1994, most of our Open House attendees were employees from the Technology Department, who had moved to the corporate site only a few months before. In 1995, a lot of clients came in small departmental groups who wanted to have formal tours conducted for them. In 1996, most of the people who attended were new employees, or those who had never been in our Library before. Many said they had received our mailers, or had seen the posters. (I wonder how many more would have come in if we had advertised on Frito's Web page—http://www.fritolay.com?)

The celebration begins

The first day of National Library Week was overshadowed by Tax Day. We had plenty of copies of IRS Form 4686 on hand for those who needed to file an extension on their taxes. Once we had clients here for tax forms, we told each of them to be sure to come back on Thursday for our Open House.

Keeping with the Special Libraries Association theme of "Special Librarians: Partners in Global Information Management", all during the week and especially on April 18, Special Librarians Day, we stressed that the Library is a partner with our clients in their quest for the information they need to make the kinds of good decisions that will take our business successfully into the next century. During tours, we emphasized who some of our major client groups are, what we do for them, and how we send the results of our research to them, such as Fax, Lotus Notes, interoffice mail or even over the Internet. To keep our name and the partnership idea in front of our clients when they were back at their desks, we printed up notepads and book-marks in green and white, featuring the SLA clip art of the computer, globe, mouse and CD/ROM discs, to which we added "Frito-Lay Library - X-4737." We gave these away in record numbers.

We learned several years ago the truth of the phrase, "If you feed them, they will come." It's hard to believe that food would be a big draw at a food company, but it is. This year's menu featured mini-bagels with fruit cream cheeses and coffee in the morning, and cookies, crisped rice bars and coffee in the afternoon. This year we featured, through a special partnership arrangement with another department, some chocolate products that are themselves a joint venture with another company and in test markets in other parts of the country.

This menu was a nice change from the usual fruit trays and muffins. The goodies were displayed on round tables set up at the front of the Library. The wonderful smell of freshly brewed coffee and warm bagels wafted down the halls all morning, to be replaced after lunch by the wonderful aroma of coffee and chocolate.

Several vendors conducted demos of their products, both CD and online databases; some vendors sent a supply of demo diskettes for people who wanted to try the databases out on their own computers.

Besides flocking to the Library for the food, people signed up to record numbers to win prizes. Over 170 people put their names in the prize drawing box on Open House Thursday. Daily prize drawings were conducted on Monday through Friday at 4 PM, with the Grand Prize drawings held on Friday at 2 PM. All the names in the box from each day were included in the Grand Prize drawing. We drew three names and gave the first choice of the three Grand Prizes to the first name, second choice to the second and last to the third. Amazingly, the tree was the last to go, won by someone who lives in an apartment. A quick negotiation was conducted; the tree was sold to someone else visiting the Library. So, there were then four happy people. And a tired Library staff.

Although it was a lot of work for an already busy Library staff, we wouldn't miss doing this event for anything. It's a unique occasion to showcase the Library and the staff, it gives us one more opportunity to reach our current and potential clients with information about anything new that's been added to our collection, and it's fun, too.

How can you find the time?

Now you all want to know how we found the time to do this. The truth is we've done some kind of celebration of National Library Week since I started here in 1981. The early years (1982 to 1984) were quite low key. The Library was a one person Engineering Technical Information Center then, and National Library Week was a good opportunity to introduce the Engineering Department staff to new books peripheral to their main interests or to inform them about any new collections that were added in the past year. In 1985, we were all working on constructing and then moving to our new headquarters building in Plano; by April we had a good, working floor plan for the Library. We posted the floor plan on a big easel, outlining where the various collections would be located, and stressed that although we were changing our name to the Corporate Library, we would always be the TIC for them.

Every year after that the promotional activities just got better; we added the daily book drawings about 10 years ago, and the Open Houses with a catered food spread about 5 years ago. (This is much easier than baking for a week!) We have always found a reason to celebrate, although usually it's to spotlight a new resource, like a CBy the end of each year's celebration, we have a very good idea of what worked best that year, and some ideas of what we want to do next year. The basics, like the book drawings, an interesting Grand Prize, an Open House with food, vendor demonstrations and guided tours we will always do. The only new part is the "hook," whatever we've gotten that's new and interesting to our clients.

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It may seem that we spend a lot of time planning and executing a National Library Week celebration each year, but we make it happen by doing it in pieces over time, with each staff member doing what she's best at doing. We flex our time to get the work done. Sometimes vendors can come to us, sometimes we make "field trips" to them. We also have several good in-house resources; we use them all shamelessly.

The bottom line

The basic truth of the matter is this: if you don't advertise, you don't sell. And if you don't sell, you don't stay in business very long. And we plan on being here for a long time.

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