Marketing and Communications Plan
for the American Library Association's Learning Round Table
2014 - 2015

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this communications plan is to support the communications objectives of and provide action items for the American Library Association's (ALA) Learning Round Table (LearnRT). This plan will serve as a guiding map for all internal and external communication regarding programs, news, and activities for LearnRT members and all library personnel interested in staff development.

MISSION AND VISION

The Learning Round Table sought the assistance of Emerging Leaders 2014 Team L to enhance and develop its communications and marketing efforts. Team L was given the task of investigating how to improve ALA members' knowledge of and access to the quality training and resources provided by LearnRT. Their main goal was to determine who LearnRT members are, what services they value, and how well LearnRT is marketing its services to members and non-members.

The Learning Round Table...

....promotes quality continuing education and staff development for all library personnel. We help you NETWORK with other staff development and continuing education providers for the exchange of ideas, concerns and solutions.

....serves as your SOURCE for staff development continuing education assistance, publications, materials, training and activities.

....is your ADVOCATE for quality library staff development and continuing education at both the local and national levels.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

In order to help LearnRT support its mission and improve members' access to the best in library training and learning resources, the 2014 Emerging Leaders Team L evaluated communications and marketing efforts for LearnRT.

For this purpose, Team L developed and distributed a twelve-question LearnRT Marketing and Communications Survey. The LearnRT Marketing and Communications Survey was distributed to LearnRT listserv, which reaches 480 subscribers (see Appendix A for survey instrument). The survey received 41 responses, equivalent to a response rate of 8%. This response rate is low but the number of responses corresponds to LearnRT representatives' estimate of the number of active members.

The survey was intended to evaluate LearnRT's existing methods of communication. Team L sought to discover what forms of communication members were using. Further, they hoped to determine which means of communication were the most effective, which need improvement, and which could be eliminated. This information would allow LearnRT to focus attention on the means of communication that were the most effective and desired.

The results of the LearnRT Marketing and Communications Survey (see Appendix B) have informed the development of this Marketing and Communications Plan for LearnRT, which will be presented at the 2014 ALA Annual Conference. LearnRT will then review Team L's recommendations and implement them over the next year. After one year, LearnRT's communications and marketing efforts can then be re-evaluated. Team L recommends a future Emerging Leaders team be given this task.

KEY FINDINGS

- A majority of respondents join LearnRT because the Round Table aligns with their professional interests and career path.
- The thoughtful open-ended responses by participants indicate that there is an interest in and commitment to being part of and improving this Round Table.
- LearnRT members and other respondents seek regularly updated content relevant to their professional needs, such as training materials. Respondents suggested making resources easily available online via the LearnRT's website.
- Respondents overwhelmingly preferred communication via email and the LearnRT listserv.
- Although respondents did not report monitoring LearnRT's current social media presence, there was some desire for increased usage of Facebook and Twitter.
- A notable percentage of the survey respondents were not members or did not know if they were, and 180 subscribers to the listserv are not members. LearnRT therefore has the opportunity to recruit new members who are already interested in the Round Table.

COMMUNICATIONS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

LearnRT GOALS	IMPLEMENTATION LearnRT leadership will add implementation information.
GOAL 1 **Social media management**	*The social media presence of LearnRT will be governed by social media best practices in order to effectively reach LearnRT members and other interested library personnel.*
Objective 1.1 Create social media best practices describing how often to post, who will post, content, etc.	
Objective 1.2 Focus on Facebook and Twitter	
GOAL 2 **Website Maintenance**	*The website content will be maintained with all components updated periodically in order to provide a better public face for LearnRT and increase website usage.*
Objective 2.1 Deliver newsletters and make freely available online	
Objective 2.2 Upload and organize conference session content	
Objective 2.3 Create and maintain a list of LearnRT resources	
GOAL 3 **Branding**	*LearnRT communications should be branded with the LearnRT logo to promote uniformity, awareness, and brand recognition.*
Objective 3.1 Create a template for communications to facilitate standardized emails, newsletters, and other promotional materials	

Objective 3.2 Develop key message and themes for LearnRT audiences	
GOAL 4 **Outreach**	*LearnRT will raise visibility and awareness by actively participating in outreach activities and following a communication calendar for timely delivery of publications.*
Objective 4.1 Create a communication calendar to ensure timely delivery of all LearnRT publications (see Appendix C for template)	
Objective 4.2 Participate in Options Fair and possibly create a LearnRT 101	
GOAL 5 **Assessment**	*Feedback will be collected year-to-year to improve and maintain access to quality training material. A timeline should be set for follow-up surveys. Other opportunities for feedback could be offered on newsletters, email.*
Objective 5.1 Develop and distribute a yearly LearnRT communication survey	

BUDGET

A $250.00 marketing budget can be utilized for marketing and communications. Team L recommends participation in the Options Fair or the creation of "LearnRT 101" program or workshop to introduce new members to the section. Branded items such as pens, key chains, notebooks, and ribbons can be purchased to distribute at events such as these.

APPENDIX A: LearnRT MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY

1. Are you a current member of the Learning Round Table (LearnRT)?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Not sure

2. Why are you a member? (Choose as many as apply.)
   - The topic is relevant to my interests or career.
   - I enjoy the LearnRT-sponsored conference events.
   - The membership fee was affordable.
   - I wanted to become involved/join a committee.
   - Other (please describe)
   - I am not a member.

3. What is the most valuable part of your LearnRT membership?
   - Open-ended

4. What else could LearnRT offer its members?
   - Open-ended

5. How did you first learn about the LearnRT?
   - ALA website
   - ALA Connect
   - Midwinter/Annual conference scheduler
   - Midwinter/Annual conference meeting
   - A co-worker or colleague
   - Other (please describe)

6. Have you ever attended a conference program sponsored by LearnRT?
   - Yes
   - Maybe, I'm not sure.
   - No

7. Where do you usually first hear about LearnRT news and information?
   - Email
   - LRT Listserv
   - ALA Connect
   - Twitter
   - Facebook
   - Word of mouth
   - Learning Round Table newsletter
   - Other (please describe)

8. If you receive the LearnRT newsletter, what percentage of the information do you feel is useful/relevant?
   - 75-100%

- 50-75%
- 25-50%
- 0-25%
- I do not receive the LearnRT newsletter.

9. Please indicate which type of methods you would prefer to use, in the future, to stay informed about LearnRT? (Please choose as many as apply.)
- Email
- LearnRT listserv
- ALA Connect
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Word of mouth
- LearnRT newsletter
- Other (please describe)

10. In the last three months, how often have you visited the LearnRT website or LearnRT social networking sites?
- Never
- Rarely
- At least once a month
- At least once a week
- Daily

11. When have you visited the Learning Round Table's website or other LearnRT social networking site, how satisfied were you with the frequency of updated or new content being added by the LearnRT?
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Other (please describe)

12. Is there anything else you would like the LearnRT board to know about their communications or marketing? Feel free to include your contact information if you would like someone to follow up with you.

APPENDIX B: SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

Survey participants were largely LearnRT members with 85% of respondents identifying as members, 12% as non-members, and 3% of respondents who are unsure of membership status. The majority of the respondents first heard about LearnRT through a colleague or co-worker (40%) or the ALA website (38%). Several factors impact why individuals decide to join LearnRT. 78% of respondents stated that they are members because the content (training and staff development) is relevant to their interests and career. Other important factors include: enjoyment of LearnRT sponsored conference events (33%), affordable membership fee (33%), and the desire to join and/or become involved in a committee (30%). Members demonstrate interest in conference programs sponsored by LearnRT, as evidenced by 68% of respondents stating that they have attended a LearnRT session.

Through an open-ended question, respondents were invited to describe what is the most valuable component of their LearnRT membership. Out of the forty responses, three prominent themes arose. The majority of respondents stated that they value (1) opportunities for networking, (2) the ability to share relevant resources and training opportunities, and (3) LearnRT conference events, discussions, and programs. Respondents also identified additional resources and benefits that LearnRT could offer to its members. These included a central information portal/clearinghouse of resources for trainers and managers, more opportunities to meet and socialize both online and face-to-face, online trainings (i.e. webinars, online modules, online discussion), and improved content on the LearnRT website.

When asked about their current preferred method of receiving LearnRT news and information, most respondents chose the LearnRT listserv (63%) and/or email (25%). Other methods included ALA Connect, Facebook, word of mouth, and the Learning Round Table newsletter (each 3%). Similarly, respondents demonstrated a strong preference for the LearnRT listserv (73%) and email (63%) as the types of communication they would like to see LearnRT focus on in the future. Respondents also demonstrated preference for the LearnRT newsletter (40%), Facebook (30%), Twitter (30%), ALA Connect (20%), and word of mouth (5%).

Respondents were also asked about the LearnRT newsletter. Opinions on the usefulness and relevance of the information in the newsletter were varied but altogether positive. 26% of the respondents felt that the information was very useful/relevant, 21% felt that the information was useful/relevant, 26% felt that the information was moderately useful/relevant, and 5% felt that the information was not useful/relevant. 23% of respondents stated that they do not receive the newsletter.

Respondents reported minimal usage of the LearnRT website and social networking sites. Nearly 80% of respondents stated that they have never or rarely visited the website or social networking sites in the past three months. This was reiterated in the responses to the following question. When asked about their satisfaction with the frequency of updated or new information added to the LearnRT website or social networking sites, 25% of respondents stated that they have never visited either the LearnRT website or its social

networking accounts. The remaining respondents felt neutral (45%), satisfied (5%), or dissatisfied (25%).

The final survey question offered respondents a chance to comment on the overall communications and marketing strategy of LearnRT. Four responses are worth noting. One respondent offered a suggestion regarding regional in-person LearnRT activities: "I'd like to sit down with people in this Round Table to talk with them in person (once a month, for example): for social networking & learning purposes. If enough people want to do this, too, it shouldn't be too difficult to set it up in the places (states of the U.S.) where people want it. Thank you." Another pointed out a feeling of being "out of the loop" - "Never heard of the listserv, have only received a couple newsletters." A third comment noted the lack of updates to the website and emphasized that "this is not doing *[sic]* to do *[sic]* much to attract new members or help people to understand what the round table does / is for." The fourth comment reiterated this feeling: "I am not aware of the website or social media sites being updated regularly...I've stopped checking because I thought nothing was being updated." These responses point to a need to provide timely updated content, improve communications with LearnRT members, and to identify opportunities for expanding existing LearnRT programs (i.e. location based meetups).

APPENDIX C: COMMUNICATION CALENDAR

Purpose / Task	Audience(s)	Timing / Frequency	Message	Method / Channel	Accountability