

Monthly reports from RPL Director gave us plenty of fodder, but how best to craft what we had to celebrate?

Who to pitch to?

What format?

slide #25 - Storytelling

Impact Stories: beneficiaries or participants, bottom of pyramid—proof of good

Cause Stories: service or product addressing social problem

Product Stories: new product, service or place

Personal Stories: learning, inspiration, result

slide #26 - Direct Mail Annual Campaign

Annual appeal: 3 mailings

Donors, lapsed donors, and patrons

Successful in terms of dollars—but were our letters causing excitement or conversation? Were they going to the right people? Were people telling people about the great things RPL does?

slide #27 - Then...

Largely operated under “tell all” while we have their attention

Bulleted list

slide #28 - Stand out

Libraries have changed, are changing—but many still think of them in traditional way

Focus on the new, without throwing the baby out with the bathwater

slide #29 - Draft, paragraph 1

Staff composed a draft, build on what we hoped people had heard about in the last couple months in press stories about the Library, emailed to me for comments (*handout: Draft FFRPL Annual Appeal Letter 2018*)

Attention grabbing opening sentence—LIFESAVER??

Personal—David, age 30, and Nurse Barb—two people from Rochester Community

Innovative-Consumer Health Information Center

I know the Library is “more than you think,” but the letter doesn’t make clear FFRPL’s connection to their current health initiative. Could that connection be made clearer—and could FFRPL be mentioned earlier in the letter? Currently, it is only mentioned in the last paragraph and there’s no direct correlation to all the information included in the previous paragraphs.

I also wonder if the listing of types of testing done by the nurse needs to then be repeated in the paragraph starting, “While David’s numbers are good...”. It’s redundant and makes the letter longer than it needs to be.

slide #30 - Final – opening paragraph

Version 2 arrived in my email—content looked good; had been some editing.

from Ned: "Thanks for the suggestions. We had mentioned the FFRPL grant that helped create Health Central early in the letter, but it messed up the flow — I will reinstate it and look at trimming the other section.

Peg, your suggestions were good and we used them to make the letter better: thanks!"
Collaboration, team approach between Executive Director and Board Chair

slide #31 - Final closing paragraph

Screenshot doesn't show what one donor called the Clincher—on your handout, see the P.S. Frivolity—but actually serious. This matters!

Talk through minor text changes from draft to final

slide #32 - final appeal letter [refer to handout]

Received the "final"

I like the content better, but the new formatting and font size makes it seem longer; get back to one page. I played with reducing font to 12 and reducing margins all around; that got it to a page and a half. As someone opening this kind of solicitation, I would be more inclined to read all of it if it didn't appear to be a two-page document. Crazy, but psychologically true for me!

Do what you think best...

Ned's respectful reply: "I, like you, get weekly solicitations from places I support, and I admit our usual AnnCamp letters (for which I am responsible) have often been very text-dense and a little hard to read because we have always tried to cram a LOT of info into that front page ONLY and never even considered enlarging the font and using the back of the letter.

But our printer liaison who works with lots of nonprofits, as well as Rebecca's own research with other cohort groups, suggests we should give this formatting a try, so I'm excited to try it and I know this will easily fit on the front and back of our single legal-sized letter. (Plus, I'm excited that the cost of adding the photo is an insignificant addition since we're printing 1/3 fewer letters using our 'previous donors only' plan this FY.)"

And they were right! Easier to read then when squeezed on one page.

slide #33 - Return on investment chart

It worked! Lots to analyze here

More targeted audience

20% more dollars raised, average gift higher—less mailed, less cost.

Hard to measure impact of format? font?

slide #34 - Spotlight on FFRPL logo

Fall 2018 focus: Raise a Reader

December focus: Intellectual Freedom

Spring 2019: too soon to tell. Keep relevant, timely.