

How to Turn Your Print Patrons into Happy Online Users

Compliments of
Morningstar Library Services

These ideas can help you get a better payback on your database investments!

It's frustrating, isn't it?

Finance, investing, health and medical issues—timely and trustworthy information on these subjects is critical to many of your patrons, particularly your senior patrons.

And as an information professional, you know that Internet databases are the most efficient research tools for the latest and best information about these topics.

Yet many of your patrons—especially those older patrons who frequent your library—shun your electronic resources.

How do you change the situation? In two steps:

1. Understand the issues in play.
2. Be sure your library's Web site and electronic references meet a handful of basic requirements that are necessary to attract database-resistant patrons.

This booklet provides tips for how to turn your recalcitrant print patrons into happy—and more knowledgeable—database users.

Why It's Hard to Adapt

Obstacles have always stopped some people from adapting to new things.

In the past, some people questioned why anyone would make an expensive phone call when you could write a letter and have it arrive in a few days. Others wondered why anyone would put your life at risk in an automobile, when warm, friendly Flicka could get you where you needed to go. And why shell out lots of money and possibly careen to earth in an airplane, when the tried-and-true train would whisk you cross-country in a few days?

Here are four things you can do to urge your patrons to adapt to the online world:

- Ignite database desire
- Delete "in" from "computer inexperience"
- Design sensibly for seniors
- Make databases super convenient

Inertia is a force hard to reverse. "Difficult," however, does not mean "impossible. "

Today's version is: Why frustrate yourself with computers and the Internet, when you can cozy up with a book at home or a periodical at the soft-seating section of the library?

Well, you get the picture: Inertia is a force difficult to reverse. "Difficult," however, does not mean "impossible."

Ignite Database Desire

You wonder sometimes, “Are people going out of their way to amaze me?”

For example, you promote a new database in all the ways available to you: Your Web site, print and e-mail newsletters, public relations, and in-library posters.

Yet, many people remain oblivious to the database. Or they fail to grasp the value available to them and continue using their old tried-and-true resources, usually in print form.

Happen to you? Then it’s time to roll up your sleeves and get personal with your patrons.

We’ll illustrate with a database near and dear to us: Morningstar.com Library Edition. Yes, telling people you have Morningstar.com Library Edition available is a great start. Many people will take a look, even die-hard print users. But getting them to use the database regularly requires you to build desire by being:

Intriguing

Your patrons probably are very familiar with the Morningstar name. They associate us with mutual funds. Yet, we have three times as many stock analysts on staff as fund analysts. And we actively cover more stocks than almost any other company in the country. What’s more, your patrons have access to every single one of our more than 1,600 reports. With this knowledge, you might develop a little in-house poster campaign. Here’s one idea:

You count on Morningstar for **fund** recommendations.

Now you can count on them for **stock** recommendations, too.

Morningstar.com Library Edition.

Topical

When a stock is big news, people just can’t seem to get enough information about it. These situations represent great opportunities to get people onto a database like Morningstar.com Library Edition.

For example, American International Group (a huge insurer) has been in the news regularly since the summer of 2004. It was then that unfavorable headlines resulting from allegations of accounting improprieties sent a shockwave through AIG’s U.S. life- and capital- markets businesses. From then on (straight through 2005), AIG was a hot news item. Investors and customers of the company wanted to know how the accounting crisis would affect them.

Then, in mid 2005, the hurricanes hit. More concerns arose about how very large payouts would affect the financial stability of the company.

At each of these junctures, AIG was top of mind with people, including, no doubt, many of your

patrons. With this in mind, you could have created a simple poster or flyer like this:

Analyst Evaluations of Stocks in the News:

- ▶ [American International Group, AIG](#)

Go to:

[Morningstar.com Library Edition.](#)

Enter the ticker symbol to access the latest analyses.

Seasonal

There are particular times in the year when investors take a good, hard look at their investments. You can probably guess many of them. There's mid-fall (tax-loss planning for year-end), December (for a quick start in the new year), tax time (retirement contributions), quarter ends (dramatic stock-price moves). A database like Morningstar.com Library Edition is the perfect reference resource in situations like these. That's because investors want to analyze their portfolios. And Morningstar.com Library Edition has among the most powerful but simple tools in the business: Portfolio X-Ray.

With this in mind, you might draw up a poster or flyer that looks like this:

[Your Library Name]'s New Year Financial-Planning Databases

- ▶ [Morningstar.com Library Edition](#) Portfolio analysis, and stock and fund reports
- ▶ [\[A couple of other appropriate databases you have\]](#)
[A brief line about how they help patrons.]

During the course of a year, you'll always find many opportunities to generate traffic for your databases, including Morningstar.com Library Edition, by appealing to the self-interest of your patrons.

Timely

Whether it's news, stock prices, or daily closing fund prices, people want up-to-date information. Without a doubt, this is one area where print media simply can't touch the Internet.

However, to make the most of this feature, to instill the kind of desire that propels patrons—and print users in particular—to check a database regularly, you must remind, remind, remind.

Again using the poster as an example, you might place a couple around your library with this message:

Check today's closing prices on stocks and funds in your retirement portfolio at [Morningstar.com Library Edition](#).

Educational

While many people seek entertainment at the library, many others visit to educate themselves. Finance and investing are areas most people, even those with experience, feel they need to learn more about. Additionally, while many people can learn simply by reading a book, many others learn faster and better with interaction and immediate feedback on their progress.

We don't know about other databases you may have, but Morningstar.com Library Edition contains a complete online, interactive, self-paced educational section called Investing Classroom.

How might you use this feature to build desire among patrons? Try posters and flyers themed like this:

Back-to-School Time!

That means more time for you to sharpen your investing know-how in the Investing Classroom on [Morningstar.com Library Edition](#).

Delete “In” from “Computer Inexperience”

Once you have the desire engine humming along, or even while you’re revving it up, it’s time to address the issue of computer inexperience.

No doubt you’re familiar with the new wave of library database users—the baby boomers. These are people very familiar with computers and the Internet. For the most part, many already use these tools at work or in their homes.

Then there is the generation ahead of them—their parents and grandparents. These groups may be unfamiliar with, intimidated by or frustrated by computers.

In the 21st Century, computer, Internet, and specific database literacy is critical to getting the most from your electronic library.

These people would benefit greatly from “how-to” computer seminars offered by their libraries.

If you aren’t currently offering computer-training programs in the basics of your online catalog, you should. And if you are doing the basics, consider these additional ideas.

- ▶ Take your seminars on the road to local senior communities—retirement communities, nursing homes, senior daycare facilities, and the like.
- ▶ In your library, and even on the road, offer seminars that go beyond the basics and show patrons how to get the most from complex databases in your collection.
- ▶ Oftentimes, your vendors will help you with these seminars. Here at Morningstar, we offer you this help at no cost. We will thoroughly train your staff in every aspect of Morningstar.com Library Edition so they can conduct in-library seminars on your behalf.

Reading literacy is an essential skill for taking advantage of the library. In the 21st Century, computer, Internet, and specific database literacy is critical to getting the most from your electronic library.

Design Sensibly for Seniors

“Seniors” is a very broad classification. It encompasses people 65 and older; but it also includes the leading edge of the baby boomer set—those who have hit their 50s.

Whatever their ages, the broad group shares the challenges of physical impairments. For the younger ones, these impairments are beginning to develop. For the older ones, these impairments may now be disabilities.

Whether just beginning or fully developed, these impairments make many aspects of life a bit more difficult and challenging. And this includes use of the computer, and electronic and Internet databases.

To win over the print crowd, it is important that you address and accommodate the common impairments to vision, hearing, motor skills, and memory.

No matter how wonderful your library’s Web site looks, or how helpful and necessary your databases, if they are hard to use, seniors, and emerging seniors, won’t use them, or will use them reluctantly and infrequently.

To win over the print crowd, it is important that you address and accommodate the common impairments to vision, hearing, motor skills, and memory.

You’ll find more and more about this subject appearing online. We’ve included a few resources at the end of this section for your convenience. Check them out and share

with those designing your library’s Web site and your e-mail newsletter, and with your database vendors.

Here are some key design considerations:

Choose Simplicity

Busy, text-heavy pages can intimidate and overwhelm just about anybody. Instead of cramming a page with text and images, consider providing more white space. Try to keep text down to smaller blocks. You can see this kind of simple, effective approach reflected in the opening screen of Morningstar.com Library Edition.

Reduce Clicking

Perhaps you’ve experienced it: You click. You wait. The Web page appears. You stare, wondering what you had in mind. As we age, our short-term memory begins to fail us. Not always, of course, but with sufficient frequency to frustrate us and have us blaming the darn Internet. Part of the solution is to reduce the number of clicks required to get to a piece of information. The other part is to keep your pages simple so they load faster.

Eschew Subtlety

Instead of getting you from point A to B, complex, subtle navigation can lead you off the cliff. Not just seniors, but everybody appreciates Web sites featuring simple, logical navigation. If people have to spend too much time figuring out where to find things, they’ll regard electronic media as a major frustration.

And that goes for links, too. If you make them too small, too subtle (for example, a gray highlight in black text), or locate them too close to each other,

seniors may not see them or may click the wrong link accidentally.

Opt for Big

Aging eyes need larger type and more contrast. Experts recommend using a minimum of 12-point type. They also urge you to avoid too many different fonts. And while you're at it, keep image gyrations—blinking, gliding, etc.—to a minimum.

Go for High Contrast

Distinguishing between similar and subtle colors can become a problem for many of us as we age. It's best to design Web pages with distinctive, sharp contrast. Seniors will find them easier to read and navigate.

You can help your patrons enjoy the benefits of online resources by making the transition from print easier with age-sensitive design.

You should also avoid colors in the green, blue, and violet range. As we age, many of us have trouble distinguishing these colors.

Electronic databases like Morningstar.com Library Edition offer patrons many advantages over print. They are timelier. Sorting through vast amount of information is easier and faster. Comparing and contrasting items is simpler, too.

You can help your patrons enjoy the benefits of online resources by making the transition from print easier with age-sensitive design.

Internet Resources

Please note that Web addresses can change with time. If you can't connect directly with the links we've supplied, use Google or Yahoo to search for current links.

Administration on Aging: The Internet and Older Americans

http://www.aoa.gov/prof/notes/Docs/Internet_and_Older%20Adults.pdf

Provides plenty of online resources for you to consult.

IBM Web Adaptation Technology

http://www.webadapt.org/ibm/splash_page.php?

Technology helping you do what is discussed above.

National Institutes of Health: SeniorHealth.gov

<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/>

See many of the idea discussed above implemented.

Older Adults and the World Wide Web: A Guide for Web Site Creators

http://www.spry.org/pdf/website_creators_guide.pdf

Specific design guidelines for Web sites.

Make Databases Super Convenient

What's the one thing everybody appreciates and never has enough of? Convenience.

In fact, it's so important that most of our economy operates on the principle of convenience. Food companies package convenience foods. Grocery home delivery services make weekly marketing convenient. Quick lube shops take the long wait out of oil changes. On and on it goes. People prize and place a premium on convenience.

The ultimate convenience is to ensure your patrons can use your databases wherever they are...

This applies to your databases. Making them available via remote access instantly increases their attractiveness to a wide variety of patrons.

Businesspeople can conduct research without leaving their offices.

Students can research their assignments from home under the watchful eye of their parents (who gratefully can garage the family taxi for the evening).

Senior patrons can research investments or medical issues without the need for travel that may be painful for some.

Patrons of all types can access information when it is most convenient for them, and not just when you are open.

The ultimate convenience, then, is to ensure your patrons can use your databases wherever they are (home or office), and whenever they want (day or night). If your databases aren't currently available by remote access, you should consider asking your vendors about this feature.

What is your experience?

We've covered lots of ground in this booklet. Perhaps some of these ideas and suggestions are new to you. Probably you've read about many. You have even tried or currently use some.

If you do, we'd like to learn about your experience. How challenging was it to implement database-usage strategies? Which were effective and which were not?

When you have a moment, share your experience with us via e-mail:
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