

EBSCO LearningExpress® Marketing Best Practices Guide: Seven Strategies for Success



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Introduction

Marketing plays a vital role in building community awareness of the information resources and services your library provides. The closure of library buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent reduction in foot traffic emphasized the need for libraries to develop effective digital marketing strategies. Coupled with in-library promotions, a digital marketing strategy increases the chances of reaching a wider audience.

EBSCO LearningExpress offers a suite of products containing tutorials, practice tests, e-books and other tools to support the academic and career development of students, adult learners and job seekers. LearningExpress content helps users improve their core skills, prepare for college admissions tests, study for the GED® test, explore careers, study for occupational certification tests, build workplace skills, find open positions, apply for jobs and get hired. Users can also find Spanish-language resources and U.S. citizenship test prep.

The marketing strategies described in this guide, along with links to helpful articles and promotional resources, can help you spread the word about your library's valuable LearningExpress content. By building awareness among your library users, you can expect to see increased usage and a greater return on your investment.

1. Website Promotion and Direct Links

Your website is your library's virtual front door. A well-designed library website makes it easier for users to discover all the library has to offer.

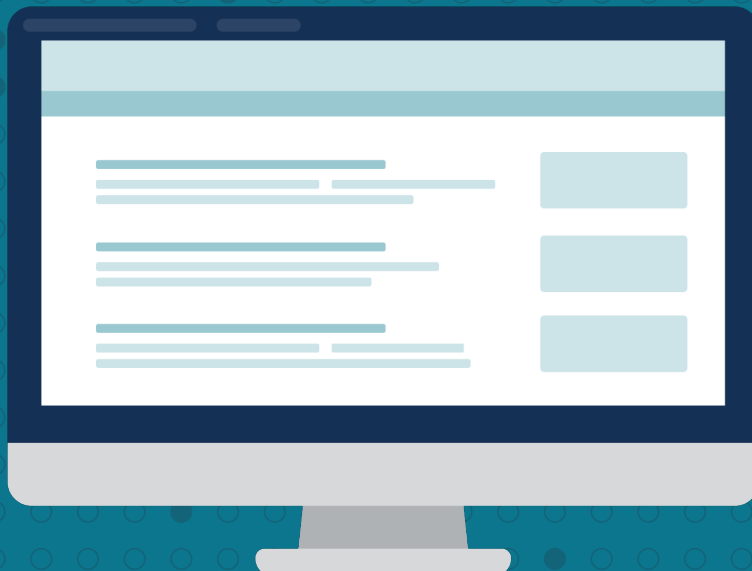
Drive traffic to LearningExpress by linking to the resource from your library home page. Also place our logo or product buttons with **direct links** on your e-resources page.

For example, **Pasco County Libraries** in Florida provides a direct link to LearningExpress under the e-content tab on its home page. A link also appears in their **A-to-Z list of databases**. In addition to a link, some libraries — such as **Bristol Public Library** — include the LearningExpress logo or product button on their databases page.

Find **logos** and **product buttons** for all LearningExpress products in our **LearningExpress Promotion Kits**. Use them as advertisements on your website's home page or on any pages dedicated to teens, adult learners or job seekers.

If you're a *LearningExpress Library* subscriber, we also provide **product buttons by center** for libraries wanting to promote special library events (see strategy #7), such as GED® test prep workshops, college nights, or job and career information sessions.

You may wish to use this **suggested text** to describe your *LearningExpress Library* platform and its individual learning centers.



Does your library website need a makeover?

Stacks is a web-based content management system (CMS) that provides everything you need to create and manage your library's digital experience.

Learn more about Stacks Library Websites

2. Signage

Library signs can be navigational, informational and promotional. They communicate news, upcoming events, policies and directions. As many libraries reopen their physical locations, signage will become important once again. According to Polger and Stempler (2014), “Library signage should help create a meaningful experience for patrons” (p. 68). Achieve this by keeping signs up to date, friendly in tone, and consistent in design and branding.

Print Signage

Be sure to incorporate LearningExpress and other library resource promotions into your signage strategy. Find customizable print materials for all LearningExpress products in our [LearningExpress Promotion Kits](#). For instructions on customizing our print materials with your library website address or institutional logo, check out [this FAQ](#).

Posters

Hang colorful LearningExpress posters in strategic locations throughout the library, such as near public computers, by the reference desk, and on information boards.

Shelf Talkers

If your library circulates print copies of test prep books, then you know how often they are checked out — not to mention how quickly they become outdated. Using shelf talkers to promote books and other library resources is a great way to reach patrons browsing the stacks.

Our LearningExpress [shelf talkers](#) can help you promote your library’s online test prep resources, so patrons know they have another — and perhaps more favorable — option. We’ve designed them to include image fields for custom QR codes. All patrons need to do is scan the code with their mobile device, and they’ll be linked directly to your library’s LearningExpress page. [QRCode Monkey](#) is a free, easy-to-use tool for creating your own QR codes. We offer several shelf talkers to choose from, each available in two sizes.

Table Tents

Place promotional [table tents](#) on group tables, in study carrels or near public computers. Include a custom QR code that links users directly to LearningExpress.

Labels

Affix LearningExpress [labels](#) on the outside cover of your library’s print test prep books to let borrowers know they also have free online access to practice tests, tutorials and study guides.

Digital Signage

Libraries can also keep messaging fresh by using digital signage, or the display of information in electronic form — such as an LCD or computer screen. Digital signage is more dynamic than traditional library signage. Digital signage can be updated regularly and is less likely to become “invisible” to library users, especially when messages and images are part of a rotating carousel. Check out these [five tips for creating amazing digital signage](#) for your library.

To help libraries promote *LearningExpress Library* and *PrepSTEP*, EBSCO offers attractive screensaver images that can be loaded onto public computers or display screens.

- [LearningExpress Library](#)
- [PrepSTEP for Colleges & Universities](#)
- [PrepSTEP for Community Colleges](#)
- [PrepSTEP for High Schools](#)

LibraryAware™ from NoveList® is a web-based platform containing marketing templates and tools to help libraries engage with their communities in a variety of ways.



3. Printed Materials

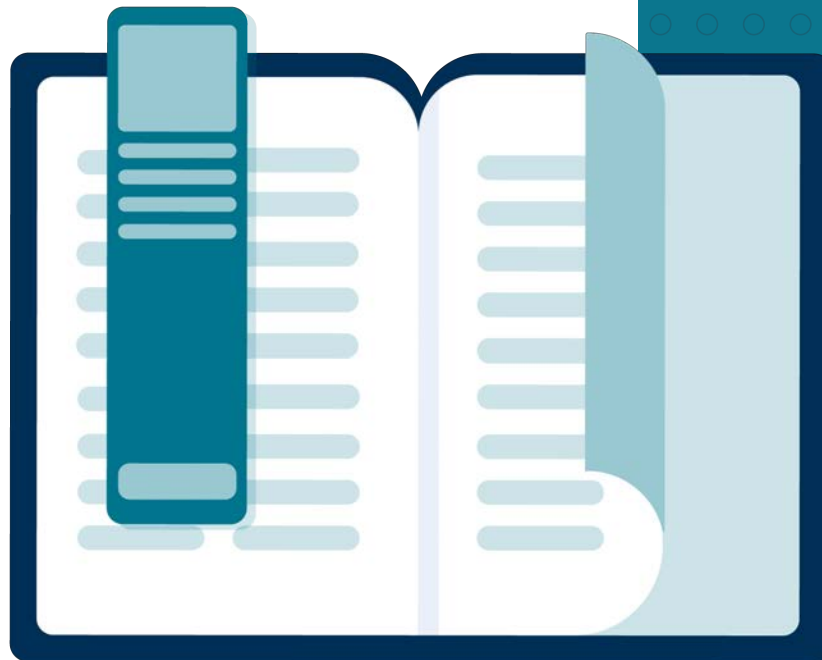
To engage and inform library users who are always on the go, it's a good idea to maintain a small stock of printed promotional materials that they can take with them.

Handouts and Bookmarks

Keep handouts and bookmarks at the reference and circulation desks. Include copies with checkouts and curbside pickup orders. Insert bookmarks in books on display. Post handouts on library bulletin boards.

Rack Cards

Like brochures at a travel agency, **rack cards** can be used to promote LearningExpress — a resource that can guide patrons along their career “journey.” Our rack cards include customizable fields for adding your own text, library logo and unique QR code.



Ready-Made Resources

You can find customizable handouts, bookmarks and other promotional materials for LearningExpress products in our [LearningExpress Promotion Kits](#). For instructions on customizing our print materials with your library website address or institutional logo, check out [this FAQ](#).

[LibraryAware](#) also offers a variety of templates to help you create your own print materials.

4. Social Media

Your social media strategy helps you reach users outside the library's four walls. Not only can you promote new books, events and programs to attract users to the library, but you can also use social media to increase awareness of the library's digital resources, such as LearningExpress. The most popular platforms for libraries are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. NoveList suggests ways of **using social media to reach your audience**.

Here are some additional tips:

1. Know when members of your target audience — job seekers, high school students or college students — are active on social media.
2. Schedule your posts ahead of time.
3. Include hashtags.
4. Maintain a consistent voice.
5. Save time: Use EBSCO's ready-made social media kits!



Case Study

Jordan Miltner is the digital media specialist for **Pasco County Libraries** in Florida. She uses social media management tools such as Hootsuite and Facebook Creator Studio to bulk-schedule the library's social media posts and track engagement.

Miltner also takes advantage of the ready-made social media kits provided by EBSCO. "I can easily schedule a month's worth of LearningExpress promotions in about an hour," she says.

By studying engagement reports, Miltner learned that Tuesday evenings were the best time to promote *LearningExpress Library* to patrons of Pasco County Libraries. However, she warns, timing will vary from library to library.

Our social media kits include sample posts and colorful images that you can use to promote your library's LearningExpress resources on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Download the .zip folders to get started:

- [*LearningExpress Library*](#)
- [*LearningExpress Job & Career Accelerator*](#)
- [*LearningExpress Workforce Solutions*](#)
- [*PrepSTEP for High Schools*](#)
- [*PrepSTEP for Colleges*](#)

Be sure to include two to three hashtags in each post as hashtags can be “a great way to solidify brand and identity” (Bradley et al., 2020). The sample posts in our LearningExpress social media kits already include the #EBSCOLEX hashtag, but feel free to add your own! For example, we noticed that some libraries include posts about LearningExpress in their #DatabaseWednesday promotions on Twitter.

Advice from the Trenches

At Riverside Public Library in California, Hayden Birkett and Melina Velazquez are responsible for marketing the library's resources on social media. Both are full-time branch managers in a system that does not employ a full-time marketing manager.

“We wear many hats,” Birkett says, adding that she and Velazquez handle marketing for all eight branches. “It’s a huge chunk of what we do.”

While Velazquez has an eye for graphic design, Birkett focuses on the messaging. She recommends librarians use a consistent voice across all marketing, but especially in social media posts. She also limits the number of social media posts to three a day (per channel) to increase the likelihood that followers will see them.

Since people's attention spans are shorter than ever, Birkett suggests keeping posts brief and communicating excitement. “Exclamation points can be used and should be used,” she says. “Not everything needs to end in a period.”

Birkett encourages librarians to find inspiration by looking at what other libraries are doing on their social media channels. “See which ones have the best engagement,” she says. “Then take pieces of what you like and model your posts after those.”

5. E-Newsletters

Since 82 percent of Americans check their personal email at least once a day, email remains a “tried-and-true technology” for reaching library users (Tanzi, p. 17-18). Where print newsletters can quickly become out of date, email newsletters offer libraries the benefit of immediacy. Canceling an event? Rescheduling a program? Adding a new e-resource? Email allows you to make last-minute changes before hitting send.

If your e-newsletter mailing list is segmented by demographic or interest, you'll be able to target specific audiences with messaging about the tools and resources available in LearningExpress. If you are not able to segment your mailing list, consider including targeted sections of your newsletter each month. Promote content in the following LearningExpress learning centers to these audiences:

Teens

- High School Students
- College Admissions Test Preparation
- Career Preparation
- Job & Career Accelerator

Senior Citizens

- Basic Computer Skills

College Students

- College Students
- Career Preparation
- Graduate School Admissions Prep
- Job & Career Accelerator

Job Seekers / Career Changers

- Adult Core Skills
- Career Preparation
- High School Equivalency Center
- Job & Career Accelerator

Educators

- Grades 4-8 Educator Resources
- High School Students

Newcomers

- High School Equivalency Center
- Recursos Para Hispanohablantes

Tips and Resources

Save time by using our **suggested text** to describe your *LearningExpress Library* platform and its individual learning centers.

Using **LibraryAware** from NoveList, libraries can send targeted messages with professionally designed templates for e-newsletters and e-blasts.

6. Outreach & Partnerships

Word-of-mouth remains an important marketing strategy. You can increase patron awareness by talking about LearningExpress and enlisting the help of others to do the same. Here's how:

1. Introduce LearningExpress resources to patrons who attend college nights, resume workshops and other relevant library programs. Mention it to those asking for print test prep books. (See strategy #7 for more ideas.)
2. Approach organizers of local job fairs to see if they'd donate booth space to the library. Use this opportunity to share information about LearningExpress. Distribute handouts and bookmarks to booth visitors and encourage them to sign up for a library card.
3. Enlist the help of outside groups, such as:
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - Entrepreneurship centers
 - Local schools and/or colleges
 - Rotary clubs
 - Workforce development agencies
4. Seek out professional development opportunities. Workshops and online courses can help you become a better marketer.

Don't forget EBSCO is your partner, too! Register for a [live session](#) with an EBSCO Training Specialist, or watch an archived recording [on demand](#).

Read about these Learn with NoveList courses, available for institutional purchase:

- [Marketing Foundations](#)
- [Telling Your Library Story](#)

Case Study

Pasco County Libraries

reaches out to local organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club and workforce development center.

"They meet a lot of people who are looking for jobs or who recently got out of jail and need to figure out what their next steps are for reentering the workforce," says Jordan Miltner, digital media specialist. "We'll get in contact with those agencies so that they know that we have resources that can assist the people they serve."

In addition, Pasco County Libraries also sets up a booth at local job and career fairs. Library leaders see it as an opportunity to not only recruit new library employees, but also promote the library's job and career resources such as *Job & Career Accelerator's* resume and cover letter builders, interviewing tips and more.

7. Live Events

Whether in-person or virtual, live programs and events give you more opportunities to publicize your LearningExpress content. Contact an outside group — for example, one you've partnered with — and recruit a subject-matter expert to co-present with a librarian. Below, we've curated just a few examples of how to incorporate LearningExpress resources into your programming.



College Admissions

Provide tips to help teens and their parents navigate the college admissions process. Invite representatives from your local community college or nearby university to co-present. Introduce attendees to the SAT®, ACT® and AP® test prep resources in your LearningExpress platform. **Career Preparation** contains resources to help students explore potential careers and learn which professions require certification. Prepare for College (*PrepSTEP for High Schools*) includes college and scholarship finders, and tips for writing the college admissions essay.



Computer Literacy

Basic Computer Skills includes courses to help patrons develop their computer and internet skills and ultimately expand their job prospects. They can learn how to use popular software programs from Microsoft and Adobe.





Financial Literacy

Personal Success Skills offers a section containing tutorials and articles to help attendees understand credit and debt, money management and investing; and insurance, benefits and taxes.



GED® Test Prep

High School Equivalency Center includes tutorials, e-books and flashcards to help students prepare for the GED® test. These resources are available in both English and Spanish.



Job & Career

LearningExpress offers enough content to support a weeks-long program for job seekers in your community. **Job & Career Accelerator** includes occupation explorers, skills and interest assessments, job and internship search engines, resume and cover letter builders, interviewing tips and more. **Career Preparation** offers practice tests and tutorials for occupational certification exams in nursing, allied health, teaching, law enforcement and the trade professions.



U.S. Citizenship

Does your library offer citizenship preparation programs? If so, be sure to highlight LearningExpress. **Adult Core Skills** includes resources (in both English and Spanish) for building reading, writing and math skills as well as a practice test containing 100 civics questions.

Tips and Resources

- Save time by using our **suggested text** to describe your *LearningExpress Library* platform and its individual learning centers
- Leverage LearningExpress video guides:
 - **LearningExpress Library**
 - **Job & Career Accelerator**
- Take advantage of our **LearningExpress training videos** in EBSCO Academy

Conclusion

Throughout this guide, we have provided a variety of strategies and tools to help you promote LearningExpress to your library users. You may choose to incorporate all or some into your library's marketing plan. Whichever practices you choose, be sure to measure the results. Did traffic to your library website increase? How many recipients opened your e-newsletter? Have you increased your social media followers and/or engagement? Are more patrons asking you about LearningExpress?

Ultimately, a noticeable spike in usage that coincides with application of any of these strategies will be a good indicator that your efforts are working.

Not a customer? Learn more about how EBSCO LearningExpress® can help you meet the needs of your library's community.

Contact your EBSCO Sales Representative or visit EBSCO LearningExpress online at <https://www.ebsco.com/products/learningexpress>

References

Bradley, S., Evans, R., Mize, M., Rutland, D., & Somodi, S. (2020). How to hack outreach: An A-Z guide of ideas, tips, and tools. *Computers in Libraries*, 40(3), 14-23.

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