

Council Meeting of
August 23, 2011

Honorable Mayor and Members
of the City Council
City Hall
Torrance, California

Members of the Council:

**SUBJECT: Community Services – Accept and Appropriate a donation of \$2,500
from the Friends of the Library**

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation of the Community Services Director that the City Council accept and appropriate a \$2,500 donation from the Friends of the Torrance Library to fund a two year subscription to Constant Contact, an email marketing service, for the Torrance Public Library.

FUNDING

Funding is available from the \$2,500 donation from the Friends of the Torrance Library.

BACKGROUND

The Torrance Public Library currently has an email list to promote adult programming. Those who indicate an interest in subscribing receive the Monthly Calendar of Events, and other program information, generally as simple email messages or attachments. This list now has over 2,600 members, and is managed by the Library Secretary using Microsoft Outlook.

ANALYSIS

In the interest of promoting the Library and increasing our marketing efforts, the Friends of the Torrance Library have agreed to sponsor a two year subscription to Constant Contact, an email marketing service. This will allow users to subscribe and unsubscribe themselves, and the library can get data on how many people receive the message, and how many open it. In addition, the messages will be much more attractive, in full color and with images.

The mailing list is very popular with library users, and using a service such as this eases the burden on staff to manage a large email list by hand. If the pilot program is successful, Library staff will investigate folding the costs into operational funds.

The Community Services Director therefore requests that the City Council accept this donation from the Friends of the Torrance Library, enabling the Torrance Public Library to increase their marketing efforts and reach more of the community.

Respectfully Submitted,

JOHN JONES
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR



Hillary Theyer
City Librarian

CONCUR:



John Jones
Community Services Director



LeRoy J. Jackson
City Manager

Attachment A: Proposal for Funding Assistance – E-Mail Marketing Service

May 16, 2011

TO: Friends of the Torrance Library

FROM: Dana Vinke, Acting Principal Librarian
Hillary Theyer, Acting City Librarian

SUBJECT: Proposal for Funding Assistance – E-mail Marketing Service

Recommendation

The Reference Services Supervisor and Acting City Librarian are respectfully requesting a donation in an amount not to exceed \$2,500 to fund a two year subscription to an e-mail marketing service. This donation will be used to enhance the Library's ability to efficiently communicate with community members in a cost effective manner.

Background

Ten years ago, the Torrance Public Library began surveying attendees of adult library programs. These surveys were designed to solicit feedback from patrons who attended events regarding the quality of library programs and to provide a forum for suggestions for future library programs. Included with the surveys was the option for individuals to voluntarily provide their e-mail or home addresses to the library. They would then be placed on a mailing list and receive periodic mailings and e-mails about Library news, special events, and new services from the Library, the Friends of the Torrance Public Library, and the Torrance Public Library Foundation.

Traditionally, the Library Administrative Secretary maintained these lists: adding and removing addresses as needed, mailing monthly library event calendars, and sending special promotional information. As program attendance increased, so did the mailing list.

Recently, the Torrance Public Library began offering e-mail notifications. This service informs patrons when the materials that they checked out are becoming due and when they are overdue at seven, fourteen, and twenty one day intervals. Patrons also have the option of signing up for periodical news, special events, and activities at the Library. E-mail notifications are extremely popular and have greatly increased the number of individuals on our events list. Presently the list contains over 2,000 addresses.

The privacy of library patrons is paramount to the Library. The Library's e-mail list is a private list. The Library does not sell or rent any patron information. Library patrons always have the option of having their email address removed from any mailing list. Library patrons will not be spammed as a result of adding their email address to our list.

Currently, the Library's e-mail system is limited to text-based e-mails (see Attachment #1) and can only handle groups of up to 50 members at a time. These restrictions make notifying people of programs and services challenging and time consuming.

Analysis

E-mail marketing is a form of direct marketing which uses electronic mail as a means of communicating messages to an audience. E-mail marketing includes, but is not limited to, sending e-mail messages with the purpose of advertising programs or services. For example, most major charitable organizations and businesses have adopted e-mail marketing to communicate with their patrons (see Attachment #2). E-mail marketing is different from standard e-mail in that it can be tracked, supports text and HTML (graphical), is user friendly, can be personalized, provides increased privacy and security options, and is more cost effective.

Tracking e-mail is important because it shows what percentage of e-mail recipients opened an e-mail, which links generate the most click-throughs and interest, and determine the performance of each e-mail blast. The software allows users to see how many people forward these e-mails to friends and who unsubscribes from the e-mail list, and why.

Graphic ability is crucial because presenting exciting images and colorful text grab people's attention. Text-based e-mails appear unprofessional, while visually appealing e-mails demonstrate credibility. Most e-mail readers now support graphics, however if the recipients e-mail service does not support graphics or have suppressed them, e-mail marketing services offer alternatives such as text only options or opening the e-mail within a web browser.

E-mail marketing offers a variety of privacy and security options which help protect users. First, most services have written policies against sharing or selling e-mail lists. For example, Constant Contact explicitly states "We will never share, sell, or rent your personal information with third parties." In addition, many contracts with e-mail marketing service prohibit the selling or renting of email addresses or personal information. Second, these e-mail lists are completely voluntary which means only people who want to receive these e-mails get them. Also, individuals can unsubscribe from the lists at any time by simply clicking on the unsubscribe link. It can also be personalized to each individual. Finally, no one sees anyone else's e-mail address.

E-mail marketing is very cost effective. An e-mail announcement can reach thousands of individuals. People can then forward those e-mails to their friends providing them the opportunity to subscribe. Unsuccessful e-mails or "bounce backs" are automatically removed from the list. In addition, e-mail marketing allows individuals the advantage of being able to post these messages to their own Facebook or Twitter accounts.

For the user, e-mail marketing software is very accessible and accommodates the basic customer as well as experienced tech savvy customer. In addition to templates most services offer online instructional webinars and 24 hour support.

There are many reputable and inexpensive e-mail marketing services available including Constant Contact, iContact, and Vertical Response. Many local non-profits use these types of services including the Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce.

Currently, the Library uses Microsoft Outlook to manage its correspondence to patrons. While Outlook works for sending and receiving emails and creating contacts, it is not as effective as an e-mail marketing service. E-mails sent through Outlook are text based, non-interactive, and lack any tracking ability. All additions or subtractions from the list must be done manually.

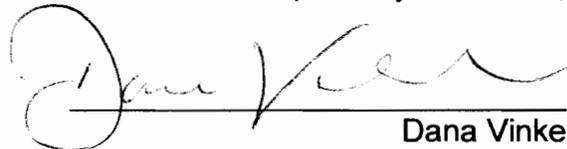
Recommendation

The Acting City Librarian respectfully requests a donation in an amount not to exceed \$2,500 to pilot a two year subscription to an e-mail marketing software. This donation will help the library promote events and services including adult programs, summer reading and Friends of the Library book sales. In addition to enhancing the library's marketing efforts, this system will provide the library with an advanced promotional tool which will allow us to stay in contact with the community.

Expenses

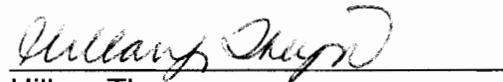
\$2,500

Respectfully submitted,



Dana Vinke
Acting Principal Librarian

CONCUR:



Hillary Theyer
Acting City Librarian