



Outline to Create an ASIN / RISA Communications Plan

Background

The ASIN vision has been in existence for over five years now. Various associated projects have been implemented, in part or in totality. Some libraries have stayed true to the initial technology plan in its entirety while others have adopted a ‘pick and choose’ model. Since the implementation of ASIN looks different at each partner institution, it is difficult to craft the common identity of ASIN; to define what the common elements are which can be promoted. Each institution also wants to maintain its own institutional identity as well, and ASIN is not always given a high profile. However, what CAUL / CBUA has accomplished with ASIN throughout four provinces is something to celebrate and promote. It's difficult to do this well without a plan. What follows is a proposal for a communications plan, with sections and questions identified. An ad hoc committee should be struck to fill in the various sections, after consultation with library staff and end-users.

Why Now is a Good Time for a Communications Plan

There is some confusion regarding the ASIN brand as mentioned above. For instance, as the East Coast Relais Consortium is folded into ASIN, it is important that ECRC committee members can see where the new committee fits in the overall structure and how Relais services will be touted as a feature of ASIN. Many staff at the member libraries are uncertain about what is encompassed by ASIN, and are not able to easily articulate the successes of the project to others. Beyond internal communications, we need a communications plan when communicating with the public. We should develop an overarching strategy for all communications, as well as smaller workplans for projects such as a newsletter or a rebranding exercise. The overarching strategy could be a one-year plan to be reviewed annually.

Proposed Elements of the ASIN Communications Plan

Assessing What We Are Doing Now

How is CAUL / CBUA communicating about ASIN now? Are we saying what we want to say, to the people we want to say it to? With whom do we want to communicate?

Objectives

Why do we want to communicate with people about ASIN? Is it to raise the profile of ASIN and associated services among decision-makers? To get staff interested in supporting the various projects? Or is it to encourage students and faculty to use the ASIN suite of applications for

research? It is recommended that a communications plan have no more than four to six objectives.

Messages

The best messages are short and simple. The messages might be the following:

- ASIN provides a way to discover all the information resources in the Atlantic region simultaneously.
- ASIN makes it easier for people to obtain materials held by other CAUL / CBUA libraries.
- ASIN ensures that there is an equitable research platform for all students and faculty in the Atlantic region.

Target Audiences

ASIN libraries communicate with various audiences, including:

- policy-makers (local, regional and national)
- like-minded organizations
- the media
- our students
- our faculty members
- our library staff
- community groups

Are there additional audiences?

Strategic Considerations

Make a list of best practices —local, national and international—how do other library consortia communicate? Are there things we can repurpose which are already being done by our colleagues elsewhere? How do we want to differentiate ASIN from other similar initiatives?

Approach

Activities could include organizing regional workshops to demonstrate research techniques using the ASIN applications (which could then be repeated at each campus); preparing online tutorials which all libraries could share; reviewing the name and logo to ensure the branding is still effective; creating an e-newsletter to outline features of ASIN and distributing it to decision-makers, library staff, students and faculty.

Resources: Money and People

An ad hoc committee of five or six people maximum should be struck to answer the questions identified, to consult with stakeholders and to prepare a plan, within a reasonably short time period. It would be ideal if something could be in place for mid-way through the fall term, or for the beginning of winter term at the latest.

Evaluation

If our objective is to encourage people to use and value the ASIN suite of products, how will we know whether we've accomplished this? Will usage counts be sufficient, or should we try to measure brand recognition or obtain user feedback?

Action Plan

Our communications plan should include an action list that explains:

- what we're going to do
- when we're going to do it
- who is going to do it
- how much it will cost

Sample Action List

Date	Activity	Lead	Support	Costs
August 2007	Finalize communications plan	Steering committee & CAUL		
August 2007	Strike ad hoc committee	Steering committee & CAUL		
September 2007	Review ASIN logo and name	Ad hoc committee	Ad hoc committee members	
September 2007	Register name, logo, domain name, etc. as required	Ad hoc committee		
September 2007	Prioritize communications activities based on communications plan; assign leads and supporters			
Ongoing	[example activity] revamp ASIN section of CAUL / CBUA website			
Ongoing	[example activity] write			

	articles for Fall ASIN newsletter			
October 2007	[example activity] issue press release listing benefits of ASIN			
Ongoing	[example activity] write articles for APLA bulletin			

Revising the Plan

We may find that the objectives we develop initially are more suited to the initial roll-out phase. We may discover additional funds for marketing or people may make it possible to do something we hadn't considered possible. The communications plan should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis by the ASIN steering committee's communications committee.