GETTING A BETTER READ ON YOUR COMMUNITY

Gale Analytics: Learn how this library system uses data to understand how patrons engage with content and programming that match their unique interests.

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Ingrid Norris
Director and CEO
Lake County Public Library
Merrillville, IN

BACKGROUND

The Lake County Public Library system serves 14 communities and 10 school districts in east-central Lake County, located within the Chicago metropolitan area. As the third largest library in Indiana, Lake County Public Library has roughly a quarter of a million patrons. Ingrid Norris, director and CEO, has been with the library system since 1977 and the acting director for five years. She is committed to increasing participation in the programs her library offers.

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE
IMPROVING PROGRAM ATTENDANCE

Lake County acquired *Gale Analytics* after another data provider fell short in narrowing patron groups by the parameters needed. "Our goal was to target tech users, and then narrow them down by age. But it was very hard to narrow down by age, or anything really. We also had to pay per download, so we had to be very selective about which communities to choose." said Norris. "*Gale Analytics* has so much more functionality. I come from an IT background and the usability of *Gale Analytics* really appeals to me."

Gale Analytics uses the power of Experian's Mosaic® USA proprietary household segmentation system to make it easier for libraries to understand their communities. Experian segments households into 71 unique profiles, or Mosaics, which are used to group patrons and non-patrons based on demographic and lifestyle characteristics.

Lake County Public Library used *Gale Analytics* to promote the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program, a book gifting program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth until they begin school. They wanted to segment their audience by school district—an option not possible through their previous data provider. "We really like the school district capability. We can't market via social media or websites because anyone can see that, but we can target one school district at a time using *Gale Analytics*," explained Norris.

Another goal for Norris and her team has been to analyze who attends what programs and where. They recently made it a requirement for every attendee to have a registered library card, in order to better track attendance. "We discovered that patrons were traveling from branch to branch based on the programs offered," said Norris. "Using *Gale Analytics*, we were able to figure out why that might be and take action." *Gale Analytics* allows Lake County to better plan future programming based on patron interest at branches that will likely have the best attendance.

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EMPOWER™ INSIGHT

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▮ BRIDGING THE GAP
SEGMENTING AUDIENCES BASED ON ENGAGEMENT LEVEL

Each marketing campaign Norris and her team execute is three-pronged: increase enrollment, increase the value of the library, and expand the library's reach to the right people. By putting their library data to work, individual branches within Lake County are looking at their own communities to find out what kind of communications their patrons and non-patrons prefer. While Norris is the current power user of *Gale Analytics*, she is tasking each branch with forming their own marketing campaigns using the data.

To better promote the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program, Norris used *Gale Analytics* to create two marketing campaigns, email and post mail, covering families in one of the 10 school districts. The email campaign targeted patrons categorized as a "likely" audience but aren't yet enrolled in the program. The post mail campaign included a paper application that recipients had to return if interested in signing up. This was sent to patrons and non-patrons who fell into another segment of their target audience. Norris plans to track the progress of both marketing initiatives to see which is more effective, and send more of the preferred communication in the future. "People are more likely to engage with marketing material from our library if it matches their interests and is in a format they're comfortable with. We've also begun uploading OverDrive data (and Hoopla) into *Gale Analytics* and hope to use the Mosaics to target people who prefer each type of content," said Norris.

By testing what's working, and what's not working, Lake County Public Library is more equipped to expand their impact and reach. Libraries can create more thoughtful campaigns and better promote, or duplicate, existing programs. For example, one of the Mosaic segments identified as moving from branch to branch for specific programming was Babies and Bliss. Ingrid responded, "This made sense because the full Experian description says they will do anything for their children."

▮ THE RESULTS
MONITORING SUCCESS

Norris can actively measure success by increased program attendance and better visibility for the library as a place that provides real value to the community.

Of the features she's explored, Norris has found the following to be the most beneficial to her library: school district boundaries and access to Experian's complete Mosaic descriptions. Norris continues to discover more, "We wanted to locate households in our Lake Ridge school district, but the district overlaps across cities and zip codes. The only way to successfully target that district was by using *Gale Analytics*. It has the ability to target by the parameters we set. That will make a significant difference in our three-pronged marketing strategy, including email open rates and application responses via mail."

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