

# In Search of a Theme: How to Market Services through Graphic Design

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## Background

In Fall 2000, the Information Resource Center (IRC) of the UT Southwestern Library conducted a visioning exercise to refocus our attention in customer service. One of the goals we identified as important and desirable was developing an online, real-time virtual reference service for our affiliated clients.

## Getting Started

1. Select the software. [We opted for the **Virtual Reference Toolkit** by Library Systems & Services, LLC (LSSI).]
2. Choose a name for the service. [We decided on **LibrarianLive**.]
3. Design a graphic “logo” for the service, following specifications provided by LSSI:
  - ♦ Width = 220 pixels (3.056 in)
  - ♦ Height = 24 pixels (0.333 in)
  - ♦ Example of Image Size =

## Defining the Theme: The Logo

Considering the limited space available in the logo, we could not convey every facet of our available services, but we did want to somehow express our connection to the health care profession.

During the discussions, one person suggested using a modified image of an electrocardiogram, which would embody not only an association with health care but also a visual representation of the “Live” in the service name.

1. Build the “heartbeat.”
2. Fill the image.
3. Write the text.
4. Prepare for the text.
5. Combine the image:



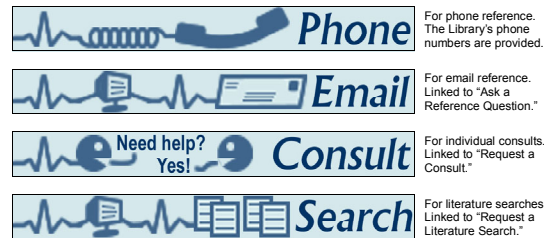
Concurrently with this project, the Library's Web pages were in the process of going through a redesign. Because the colors for the new Web page were defined, those colors were incorporated into the image design.

## Developing the Theme: “Branding”

We looked at Web sites of other libraries that were also using the LSSI software to gather inspiration for how to display the service on our Web site.

Eventually, we decided that the best option was to group related services together on one page, but we also wanted to maintain a consistent look with the Library's new Web page design, which was nearing completion, as well as “brand” the services together.

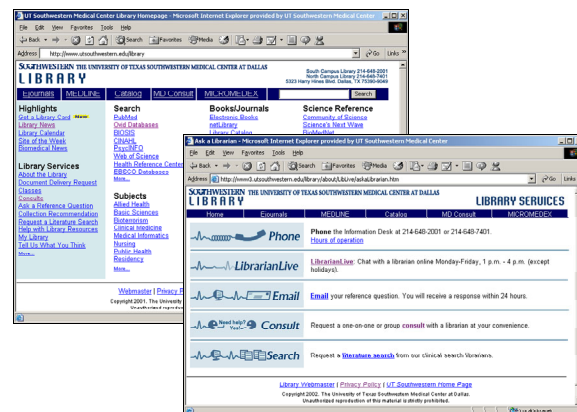
Using the LibrarianLive image as the model, the following images were created.



## Uniting the Pieces: The Web Page

By the time the Library's new home page was ready, we had completed the design of our “Ask a Librarian” page.

By using the new design's color scheme, we felt that we were able to create a consistent page layout even though the service page would be substantially more graphic-intensive than other new Library pages.



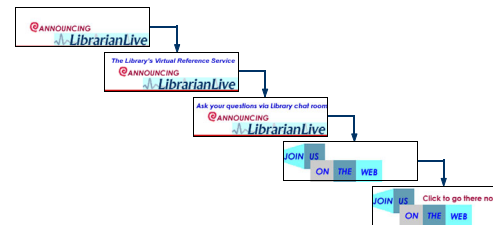
The end result also had the added benefit of “simulating” the pale blue (or green) sidebar on the “Ask a Librarian” page, thereby continuing the new design's general appearance.

## Marketing the Theme: Part 1

Once the Web page was in place, we officially launched the service on February 14, 2002. Our initial service time was 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

### Initial Marketing Methods

- ♦ Link to “Ask a Librarian” page on the Library's home page (first under “Highlights,” then in a permanent location under “Library Services”)
- ♦ Banner image (animated GIF) on “Library News” and “My Library” home pages



## Marketing the Theme: Part 2

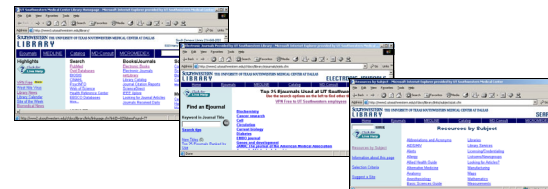
After two months of service, we looked at the number of online reference sessions we had conducted and realized that the service was little used.

Month	# of Sessions	Total Service Time
February	3	0:16:50
March	9	1:02:51

Therefore, we decided we needed a stronger presence on the Library Web site. Once again, using the home page's basic color scheme, a more “eye-catching” image was created.

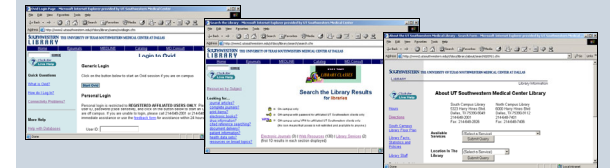


This image was immediately placed on the Library home page as well as on a few select Library pages, including the “Electronic Journals” and “Resources by Subject” pages.

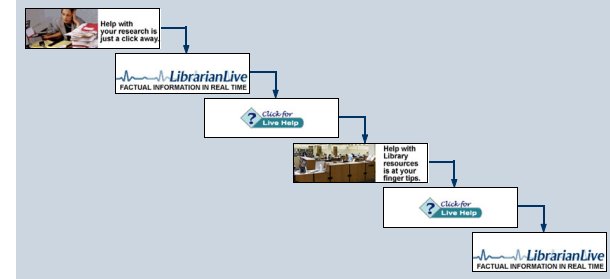


## Increasing the Visibility

The “Live Help” image was initially limited to a small number of pages, but since many of the Library's Web pages are dynamically generated using ColdFusion, including the image in the standard page template was a very simple process. (Note: This also included pages that had not yet been moved to the new design.)



Also, a second animated banner was created to highlight the service, using the new “Live Help” image.



## Beyond the Theme: Conclusions

Some simple guidelines can be applied to any effort at marketing through graphic design.

1. Think about how the graphics should look. If necessary, create design “mockups.”
2. Look at other Web sites for inspiration. Often, there's no need to reinvent the wheel, but it can be reinterpreted.
3. Don't stop with just one project. There are multiple opportunities to catch people's attention.

## Looking Ahead

The service is still not as heavily used as we would like, but that is due more often to proxy server issues and not our marketing efforts.

However, we are now investigating measures to evaluate or improve the service, including:

- ♦ Analyzing “click-through” statistics from links/images
- ♦ Using other available “seats” for general assistance (e.g., password resets, etc.)