



Jamaica Library Service

**Rebranded and Repositioned:
a 'Wow' library network for the 21st Century?**

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122 Management and Marketing with Metropolitan Libraries

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Introduction

Management and marketing has been one of the major focal points of the Jamaica Library Service (JLS) over the last five (5) years. The consolidation of management expertise within the organization made it possible, among other things to assist in driving a marketing renaissance. This was necessary as it was recognized that given the impact global changes are having on the Jamaican populace, the JLS had to re-position itself through branding and other marketing initiatives.

Background

Jamaica Library Service in its fifty-nine year history has been a driving force on the Jamaican development landscape providing information, recreation and educational services through a network of public and school libraries.

Coverage in the Public Library Network is achieved through-

13	Main Libraries <i>located in the capital of each Parish</i>
112	Branch Libraries <i>62 - operating full-time;</i> <i>50 - open to the public for less than 40 hours each week</i>
13	Mobile Libraries <i>Serving 468 communities that have no fixed library facility</i>

18	Areas of service to special categories of users. <i>7 Hospitals;</i> <i>7 Correctional Institutions;</i> <i>2 Children's Homes and Places of Safety</i> <i>Service to the Visually Impaired</i> <i>Postal Readers</i>
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Service is provided also to libraries in nine hundred and twenty-six (926) schools through six (6) Regional Offices giving assistance to students, academics, administrative and support staff in the categories of teaching institutions listed below:

Infant	29
Primary	357
Technical High	9
Vocational/Special	4
Secondary/High	95
Primary & Junior High	87
All-Age	346

Over the years the organization benefited from the expertise of some of the most talented librarians and information professionals, who provided an environment of on-going internal assessment to secure the continuing relevance of the largest library network in Jamaica and indeed one of the most comprehensive in the Caribbean.

It was apparent that while the Jamaican public and members of the school population were acutely aware of the Public and School libraries, there was some degree of vagueness within a significant target group regarding the exact type and kind of services provided and the programmes available. This was happening in an environment where the organization was 21st century responsive becoming one of the first and the largest single provider of computer services including Internet access in Jamaica. There was however a number of persons who still saw the Public Libraries as a place for 'stamping books' and manned by 'ladies with tightly knotted buns', whose sole purpose was to tell clients to be quiet.

Students and other members of the school population, in many instances, placidly accepted the presence of the library where functional ones existed, however there would not be any major dissent from students or teachers if space challenges required the conversion of a library to a classroom. In many instances the students failed to make the connection between a well- resourced library and their overall success in school.

Many factors were provided in order to support an enabling environment for Managers and staff to operate at a high level of productivity. In addition to improvements to buildings, physical infrastructure, programmes and services, significant funding was provided for the other major focal points in the organization namely:-

1. Human Resource Asset
2. Collection Development
3. Information Technology

All service points provided the platform to engender community development and renewal supported by a tailored menu of programmes and services. Throughout the island the Public Libraries were making significant contribution to nation building, and School Libraries also were making a positive impact on the lives of students and providing necessary support for other members of the school population. There was however, a disturbing number of persons who, though affected by the Library's presence, still remained uncertain about exactly what the public libraries were doing, and the importance of school libraries to the transformation of education in Jamaica. This was cause for concern.

The Jamaica Library Service had to once again remind the public, school population, policymakers and others of the critical importance of libraries to personal and national development in what had now become a complex Jamaican society.

The Jamaican Society

Contemporary Jamaica is relatively complex and internally diverse, with the majority of its people being of African descent, representative mainly of the Chinese, Indian, Jewish, British and other races giving credence to the motto "Out of Many, One People". The country has made remarkable progress in areas of financial sector reform, reform of the social sectors including safety nets, HIV/AIDs prevention and control and in education. Despite these impressive achievements the country is confronted by serious social issues including un-employment and crime. A recent World Bank study calls for Jamaica to increase its international competitiveness and productivity to achieve sustained economic growth and to further reduce poverty¹. There is clear correlation between a nation's competitive advantage and the quality of its workforce.

People must have access to information. They must possess the skills to recognize when information is needed, how to find it and determine its value and how to use it effectively and efficiently. Libraries, Librarians and Information Managers make this possible.

Jamaica is charting a course towards global knowledge management and demanding of its people new skills including information literacy and the competence necessary to operate in a global economic environment.

The advent of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy '*intended to benefit the people of the region by providing greater and improved opportunities to marketing of goods and services and attracting investment*'² would also create a greater level of competitiveness for developing countries, hence the need had become greater than ever for the 'ordinary' man in the street to access the highest quality information to make it possible to respond to an ever changing environment, and to be able to compete in a single Caribbean Market.

¹ Jamaica: The road to sustained growth. World Bank, January 2004

² <http://www.caribcaricom.org/jsp/secretariat>

In this context, it was most important for there to be a heightened awareness of the role the Jamaica Library Service plays in these dynamics and the consequent need to have its resources fully utilized.

Repositioning Initiative

It was imperative that the organization re-position itself in the minds of Jamaicans and be appropriately viewed as a vibrant modern library service, meeting and exceeding the needs of its clientele, 21st century ready, delivering the highest quality service, technology enhanced and customer focused. The Jamaica Library Service recognized that it was imperative to occupy a “meaningful and distinct competitive position”³. The organization ought not only be relevant, but must also be perceived as relevant and irreplaceable!.

Managers were excited at this prospect; however none was unaware of the fact that there were many challenges in mounting a re-positioning initiative; paramount among which were budgetary constraints and staffing insufficiency especially at the level of persons qualified in Librarianship and Information Science. There were no illusions about the likely gap in the time spanning the generation of the idea and the implementation process; therefore the re-positioning initiative had to employ strategies which would appeal to the target market’s sense of reality, its perception of reality and its anticipation of ‘wonderful things to come’. This involved a process aggressively spearheaded and stoutly championed by top management while being clearly understood and unswervingly supported by employees.

Rebranding

Re-branding was one of the tools used to communicate the re-positioning of the organization. The process started with the introduction of a new logo⁴ - vibrant in its representation of the new corporate colours, re-designed to depict an aligning of tradition with technology.

The process continued with a programme of enhancement of the aesthetic appeal of the corporate headquarters and public library buildings. This was done both internally and externally. In order to present an environment capable of changing lives the physical space in which service was provided had to be welcoming and had to support the most appealing library experience, stimulating creativity and innovativeness, encouraging fun and excitement. The library had to be both a sanctum for the serious researcher, a haven for those wishing to retreat from providing to gaining information, as well as a place to play, be silly but always somewhere conducive - inspiring lifelong learning,

³ Kotler, Philip. Marketing management: analysis, planning, implementation and control – 9th ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, c1977

⁴ Appendix A: Jamaica Library Service - Logo

Library buildings were refurbished and enlivened by being repainted in the new corporate colours⁵. The landscape in Jamaica changed; public libraries in their vibrancy became centers of attraction. Members of the public were highly complimentary about this metamorphosis, declaring that the buildings stimulated and energized them.

The choice of colours was not without controversy however; as some persons felt the libraries should be painted in quiet, staid, 'safe' colours, more in keeping with a certain sober, conservative perception of how a public library should look. The colours generated debate, and debate generated interest. The media was also a part of the dynamic mix with radio and television talk show hosts commenting positively on the re-branded buildings. Members of the public would call voicing strong opinions on the choice of colours. These opportunities were used to invite callers to visit and participate in the diverse menu of services and programmes available. With rebranding it was no longer business as usual at the Jamaica Library Service.

The organization operates in a country that enjoys perpetual summer with average temperature ranging between 80 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Recognizing the need to provide for its external customers an atmosphere that is conducive to the assimilation of information and conscious of the direct relationship between the well-being and productivity of its staff, the administration embarked on a programme of installing air-conditioning units wherever feasible. Where this was not possible, other efforts were made to minimize the heat inside buildings, and all Libraries reorganized to provide facilities to enhance the welfare of both staff and clientele. Special attention was given to type and kind of furniture and fixtures, both to allow design appeal and promote ergonomic correctness.

The creation and maintenance of green spaces were also paramount; landscaping lush in its appearance and soothing to the spirit was also a major consideration. The addition of even small, inexpensive touches such as a single plant in a Branch Library was welcomed and lauded by users. The aim was to create an ambiance of "classic elegance". There were numerous compliments on the re-designed corporate headquarters - the result of repairing, re-upholstering and renovating items of furniture that had already been discarded, and adding some very special touches to the interior, such as emblazoning the name of the organization in bold gold lettering on a central wall in the entrance foyer. The psychological intent and impact were phenomenal – and yet very cost effective.

In addition to budgeted funds, partnerships with private sector companies, non-governmental organizations and generous individual donors assisted in the child-friendly refurbishing of Junior Libraries. One very rewarding feature of this particular aspect of the programme was the creation of cheerfully coloured, specially designed and comfortably furnished rooms/niches for the tiny tots dubbed JLS/Chicky Reading Corners established in collaboration with Restaurants of Jamaica, owners and operators of the Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise.

⁵ Appendix B: Jamaica Library Service - Buildings

Private sector partners also made significant contribution to upgrading a number of government owned School Libraries, augmenting a special funding allocation made by the Ministry of Education and Youth under the School Enhancement Programme, to upgrade schools, including their library facilities.

The Jamaica Library Service has been fortunate to have achieved through relationship -building a group of loyal, committed private sector partners who share the organization's vision and mission and continue to provide invaluable financial support in the organization's developmental and operational goals and objectives.

Included in the process of renovation and refurbishing was the signage. Not only were all signs standardized but effort was made to have them made more visible and very attractive – reflecting the corporate colours. This practice was extended to interior signage as well.

The fleet of general service vehicles and mobile libraries for both the Public and the Schools Library Network was re-lettered allowing for the promotion of the programmes and services offered and attractively branded in the corporate colours.⁶ This provided a strategic reminder of the new image of the Jamaica Library Service wherever the vehicles moved throughout Jamaica. Some of the Mobile Library units displayed advertisements of developmental partners/sponsors – for example Cable & Wireless (Jamaica) Limited – the telecommunications company that through its Foundation assisted with the initial provision of internet services on Mobile Libraries.

It is important to note that with a large island-wide network of libraries at varying stages of refurbishing there were painful moments when the organization was targeted by the media especially because a particular library/group of libraries was not at the now established standard. This was but one of the challenges experienced in the on-going process to have all libraries as attractive spaces.

With a staff of approximately eleven hundred (1,100) widely dispersed geographically, employees often do not recognize each other given their placement in different locations. The institution of a uniform for staff – attractive, tropically-colourful and appropriately professional in presentation and unifying in its articulation was another branding initiative⁷. This initiative will make the Library and its staff even more visible. It will facilitate easy identification of colleagues while improving corporate unity and will enhance the image of a professional unified team. The process of discussion, concession and selection was readily embraced by the majority of members of staff who eagerly anticipate implementation in September 2007.

⁶ Appendix C: Mobile Libraries

⁷ Appendix D: Staff uniforms

Programmes & Services

Programmes and services offered in the Public and School Libraries have always experienced significant success; however as a part of the re-positioning initiative there was a review not only related to type and content but also to packaging and presentation. It was very important to remove any notion incorrectly preconceived relating to the Library's targeted clientele / whom the Library catered. It was necessary to take the Public Libraries 'beyond the walls'⁸, moving away when required from the traditional book delivery mode. Managers were aware that the appeal and reach of some of the programmes and services undertaken in the network were not entirely successful in reaching the desired target markets.

Services such as offering professional and technical advice and assistance to schools were increased by over forty-percent. The number and frequency of Seminars and Workshops for Teacher/Librarians were expanded, with the content offering altered as necessary to reflect the need to better equip this group with skills vital to drive library development.

The National Reading Competition for children and adults, launched in 1988 as part of the JLS 40th Anniversary celebrations, continued to be a major item on the national social calendar. During its early years, the Competition involved only the age group 9-11 years. It has become progressively more popular and is now highly successful. The Competition has expanded to include all age levels divided in five categories, allowing persons from ages 6-99 to participate.

The National Reading Fair was launched in 2004 as part of the celebratory activities organized to recognize Parish and National Champions in the Reading Competition. An innovative product extension of the National Reading Competition and the first of its kind in Jamaica, the Reading Fair is the culminating event for the National Reading Competition. Each year the Fair celebrates reading, gives exposure to literature of all types and provides entertainment that reflects the importance of reading as a fun activity.

The Competition was re-packaged to include a motorcade component - alive with colour, design, music and movement grabbing the attention of the public at large, animated by pulsating rhythms accompanying Mobile Libraries and gaily decorated vehicles along the highways⁹. The fantasy and splendor of the motorcade were reflected in the active participation of bystanders. Persons who would otherwise have remained aloof were lured to join in spontaneously and generally, both viewers and participants have an unforgettable experience. Jamaicans have been accustomed to having motorcades celebrating carnivals and the launch of various commercial product lines by private sector companies. The re-packaged Reading Competition event was the first time that 'reading' was on stage, ablaze with all the pomp, colour, sound and ceremony usually reserved for other more hedonistic activities. The motorcades heralding the National Reading Fair have been tremendous successes, as have been the motorcades held at the parish levels to celebrate the parish champions.

⁸ Jamaica Library Service annual report, April 2005 – March 2006/Jamaica Library Service

⁹ Appendix E: National Reading Competition 2006

Both events over the last couple of years have benefited from extensive promotional and advertising support resulting in rapid growth in sponsorship from the private sector. This has resulted in a product of very high visibility, commanding maximum audience appeal when broadcast on national television.

Interest in the Competition has grown especially in the adult categories. The advertising programme used to support the Competition encouraged persons who in the past showed no interest in either the competition or in reading.

The prizes offered have been very attractive and of a diverse nature, including books, computers, trophies, gift baskets, gift certificates for wellness treatments, designer clothes, trips to local resorts and Caribbean destinations, gold pins, meals at gourmet restaurants and winnings of cash award including bursaries to cover the cost of school supplies and school fees. The image of the Competition was changed to reflect the repositioned organization, and for the first time a new adult profile of persons – young professionals including journalists, radio personalities, doctors, and teachers showed interest in competing.

The range of public education programmes widened to demonstrate heightened sensitivity to certain trends that would indicate public interest or concern. Users and non-users wanted a voice in what was presented to them, and on issues affecting them or issues on which they had very strong opinions. The following examples illustrate.

Organized in association with the Jamaican Ministry of Health the public education programme on Skin Bleaching was a significant initiative – indicative of an organization willing to tackle difficult issues, in satisfaction of public need. For inexplicable reasons, the phenomenon of using chemicals to lighten the skin emerged in certain socio/economic groupings in Jamaica. This activity was not gender specific. The Jamaica Library Service in rising to the challenge of providing public education on a sensitive issue organized a series of panel discussions and mobile exhibitions that examined the topic from a medical and psycho/sociological perspective. The programme was targeted specifically at the youth due to the ‘worrying’ prevalence of bleaching in this sector of the national demography. The programme generated intense discussion and interest, and young adults both male and female not usually library users or visitors found the presentation very useful and provided an arena in which to vocalize their opinions. It is instructive to note that many felt that specific persons were being targeted, as the practice was no different from Caucasians attempting to alter the colour of their skin by tanning.

In subsequent discussion with some of the participants in this programme they were quick to declare that they had been very apprehensive about coming into the Library, however having participated in the presentation, viewed the exhibition and spoken with a number of persons both employees and users, they felt more relaxed and really happy that they had come. It was not uncommon to hear members of the public declaring, “I did not know the library did that.”

The Priorities for Local AIDS Control Efforts (PLACE) was another outreach programme implemented in partnership with the Jamaican Ministry of Health. This HIV/AIDS/STI prevention intervention covered a period of six months where trained Ministry of Health personnel interacted on a weekly basis with clients of the main Library in Kingston & St. Andrew

The Outreach Officers used creative strategies to reinforce HIV prevention knowledge and skills in reaching the adolescent audience. In an unobtrusive manner they engaged users of the Library individually in conversation to assess their risk of contracting HIV/AIDS/STI and to offer efficacious strategies to lower their perceived risk. The findings to measure the impact of the intervention are currently being collated; however there is no doubt that the intervention will promote awareness and interest in the subject of HIV/AIDS prevention skills.

Another programme of seminal importance promoted by the Jamaica Library Service and supported by significant marketing funding has been the 2007 recognition of the 200th anniversary of the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Africans in which the Jamaica Library Service partnered with other agencies in marking this most significant milestone in the nation's history.

The Jamaica National Bicentenary Committee was formed to coordinate activities island-wide. Jamaica Library Service is currently sponsoring a year long schedule of activities including a major exhibition, lectures, panel discussions and cultural presentations. Again, while there was consensus that this period in the nation's history must be recognized, there were mixed emotions. Some persons would rather forget about the 'whole mess', and yet others felt that to ignore, pretend or hide would be a major injustice given that the slave trade was one of the most horrific crimes in human history. It is worthwhile noting that this event was being marked at the same time Jamaica was having a problem with skin bleaching.

Of a different nature was a very successful programme which generated immense interest and was very successful - a week-long Reading Tour across the island organized to further expose the country to renowned Jamaican author Olive Senior. This innovative programme was intended to create avenues through which Jamaicans (particularly youth) could be exposed and could come to appreciate the highest quality literary experience. The tour was a resounding success encompassing discussions with the author and readings from her works:

Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage
Over the Roofs of the World
Gardening in the Tropics.

Of similar nature is a forthcoming Programme – a collaborative effort whereby the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons will be partnering with the Jamaica Library Service in presenting a Public Education Series on Human Trafficking, an international problem which recently reared its ugly head in Jamaica.

Strategic Direction

The 'WOW' library appeal could not be limited to re-positioning and re-branding only. There had to be a stated strategic direction to guide the process and to promote sustainability and consistency. A strategic development planning process was undertaken through consultation with varying groups of stakeholders over a period resulting in the production of a Strategic Development Plan for the years 2006-11. The process resulted in a new vision and mission statement and documented corporate core values.

Mission Statement:

The Jamaica Library Service exists to enable national development through the creation and support of a knowledge-based society of culturally aware lifelong learners by providing universal access to information. Being customer-focused and trained, competent, motivated and empowered team will achieve this.

Vision Statement:

In the year 2016, we are a well-resourced, well-managed and technology-enhanced organization, with well trained, competent and satisfied staff providing universal access to information and knowledge, resulting in excellence in customer service, an information literate society and a positive impact on national development.

Core Values – (mnemonically referred to as RICOA)

*Respect
Integrity
Commitment
Open-Mindedness
Accountability*

Five Strategic Objectives were identified:-

1. To create an information-literate society
2. To have satisfied customers
3. To achieve universal access to information and knowledge
4. To have in place a team of well trained, competent, high-performing and satisfied staff
5. To have in place a well-resourced, effective and efficient organization

A number of the strategic choices will assist the re-positioning, and re-branding of the organization providing a cognitive shift to becoming customer-focused (both internally and externally) throughout the organization.

The organization understands that to serve the customer, one must first know what the customer wants, therefore relationship building is seen as a primary goal if success is

to be achieved in creating an environment of not only meeting, but also exceeding the needs of both groups of customers.

As a consequence therefore the decision was taken to commission major research studies to ascertain the needs of both groups of customers (among other variables) to support achieving ‘satisfied customers’. Other strategic choices include:-

- continuing staff development
- performance management
- complete automation,
- provision of access to computers including internet free of charge
- expansion of income generating activities to establish gifts shoppes and cafes.

Training in management expertise to support the repositioning exercise is also a critical component of the strategic direction of the organization. The desired training spans both the local and international arenas. Senior Librarians/Managers and Directors are exposed to training through seminars, workshops conferences; Librarians and other staff members are given time-off through day release, study leave and scholarships to study a variety of disciplines at the tertiary and other levels.

Notwithstanding many challenges, the Jamaica Library Service has seen exponential growth over the last five years, with major successes in forging and maintaining partnerships resulting in significant funding support.

Creativity and innovativeness have been a hallmark of the organization’s direction. Significant improvement has been made in the percentage growth and retention rate of Librarians joining the Service. The physical infrastructure has improved significantly providing a better space for both staff and users. Improvements including necessary alterations and adjustments have been blue-printed to ensure accessibility by the elderly and the physically challenged. Implementation of the new technology is becoming more widespread resulting in eighty-six (86) Public Libraries now being able to offering computer services including Internet; each being equipped with the most current hardware available - including provision in an initial number of Service Points of software for the visually handicapped.

The infrastructure to support full automation is being implemented with local area network at the Corporate Headquarters and the Kingston & St. Andrew Parish Library, with implementation in five other regional Libraries scheduled for the current year. Full automation in all other Parish Libraries is scheduled for early 2009.

A technology- enhanced and globally-oriented Jamaica Library Service, offering high quality service with the focus on the customer by a well-trained, competent and satisfied staff is assured of success given its total commitment to the process.

Conclusion

Assistance and encouragement received through strategic partnerships ensures valuable contribution to national development.

Re-branded and re-positioned, the organization is well on the way to being a WOW library network! How long before it reaches this enviable goal? Only continued creativity, dogged perseverance and time will tell.

May 2007

Appendix A: Logo



Present Logo



Former Logo

Appendix B: Buildings



Foyer – Headquarters - View 1



Foyer – Headquarters - View 2



Headquarters



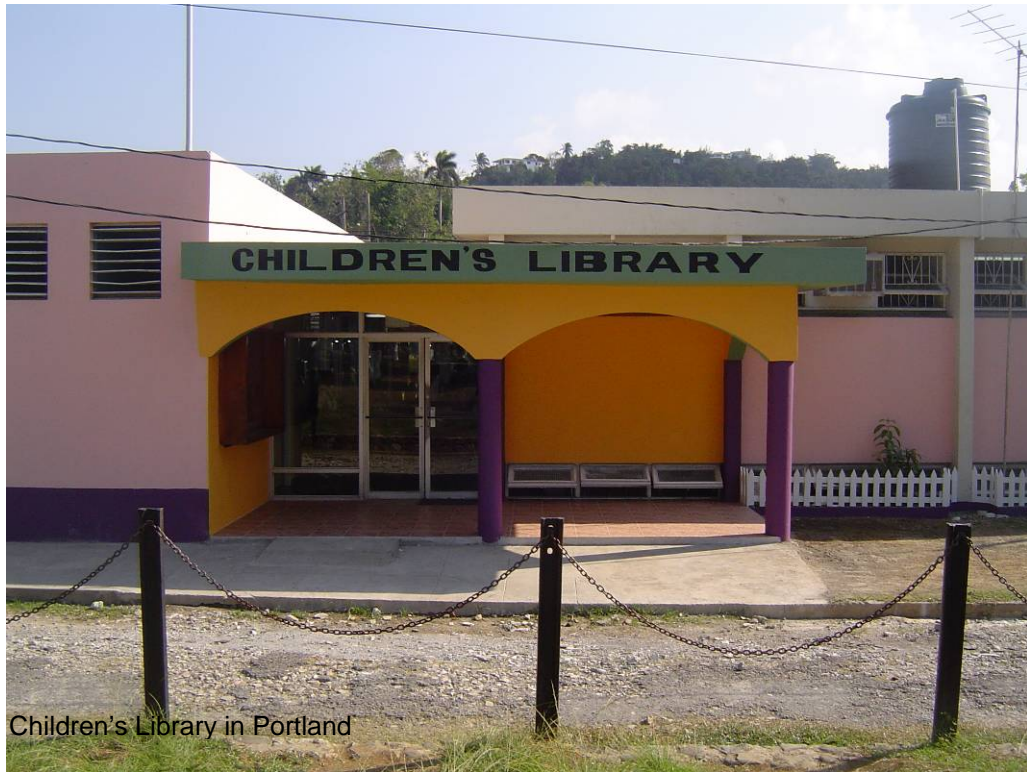
Kingston & St. Andrew Parish Library



St. Catherine Parish Library



Manchester Parish Library



Children's Library in Portland



Balaclava Branch Library



Santa Cruz Branch Library



Sign for Whitehouse Branch Library



Tiny Tots Library – Kingston & St. Andrew Parish Library



Millicent Clare Room – Hanover Parish Library



Library - Greater Portmore Primary School

Appendix C: Mobile Libraries



Mobile Library with ICT Services



Mobile Library with ICT Services – Branded by Cable & Wireless Jamaica Foundation

Appendix D: Uniforms



Proposed Staff Uniforms – To be implemented in September 2007

Appendix E: National Reading Competition 2006



National Reading Fair 2006 Motorcade



National Reading Fair 2006



National Reading Competition 2006 Champions



Juniors Competing in National Reading Competition



Adult Competitors in National Reading Competition



Logos of Sponsors for the National Reading Competition and National Reading Fair 2006