



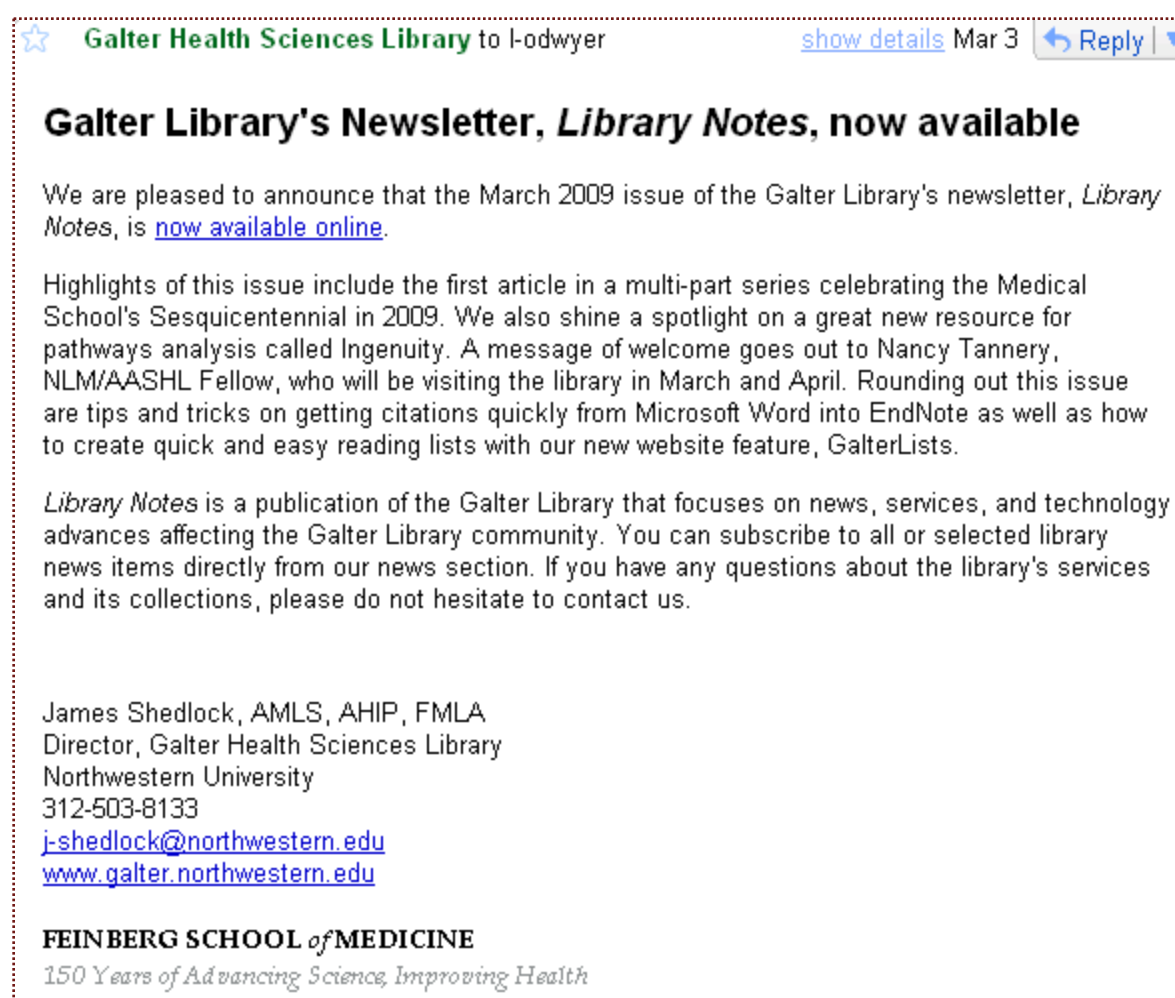
Linda O'Dwyer, Communications Coordinator and Education Librarian; Michelle Frisque, Head, Information Systems; Jeremy Prevost, IT Consultant, Galter Health Sciences Library, Northwestern University, Chicago, IL

Introduction

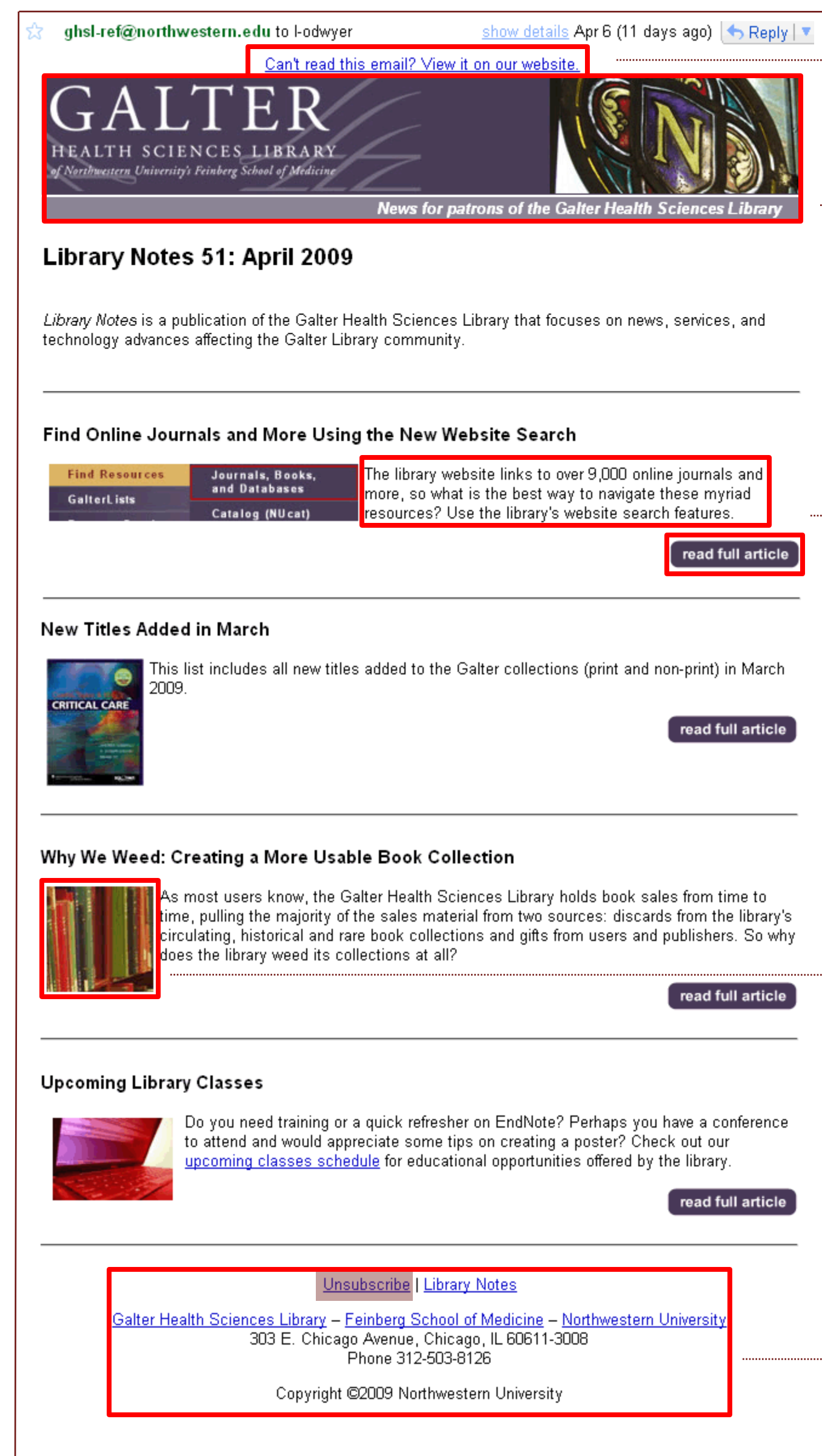
The library newsletter is a common communication mechanism between the library and its users. The objective of this project was to utilize available technologies to improve communication with users and ensure that the library's newsletter email would stand out in a user's email inbox.

The Plan

Prior to this project, we announced the latest newsletter using a plain text email message with a link to the newsletter on the library website.



Taking our cue from association newsletters like ALA Direct and MLA Focus, we decided to use HTML and CSS to create a graphically-appealing email template to inform users that the latest newsletter is available.



Links to the newsletter website for users who are unable to read the email version

A banner similar to the one on the library website

Short introductions to each item with links to the full-text in our Library News blog. The message we are trying to convey for each article should be easily expressed in the first line or two of text.

Attractive, eye-catching graphics which also link to the full articles.

A footer with links to the library, past newsletters and an option to unsubscribe

Several test templates and designs were created. A shortlist of designs were tested using various email clients: Eudora, Outlook, Gmail, Thunderbird, Yahoo, and Apple Mail. The above graphic demonstrates how the email looks in Gmail.

Results

Not all email clients tested supported the use of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) nor did they totally support HTML. Display differences in each client were noted and the template adjusted so that it would work for most types of email services. We used a combination of CSS and deprecated HTML code to achieve the design.

	Apple Mail	Thunderbird	Gmail	Eudora	Yahoo
Supports CSS: Font Face	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Body Font Face					No
Supports CSS: Font Size	Yes		No		No
HTML Font Size			Partial + works - doesn't		Yes
Supports CSS: Link Color	Yes	Yes	No		Yes
Body Tag Link Color			No		
Supports CSS: Padding	Yes	Yes	No		Yes
HTML Background color	Yes		partial (tagline did not work)		Yes
Supports CSS: background color	Yes		No		No

For now, the email is created in HTML and distributed using the library's user email list. A future enhancement will allow the email to be automatically populated from pre-existing news items before final approval and distribution.

Reaction from users has been positive:

I really like the new format for the newsletter. Much more informative and user friendly!

- Faculty member

Conclusion

The library newsletter is often the library's best opportunity to tell users about new resources, tips and tricks, and what's happening at the library. Creating attractive, attention-grabbing library communications is key to ensuring your message will stand out from the rest of the messages in a user's email inbox.