

The BIG BAD Branding Guide*

for the folks in marketing (bless their hearts),
Library programmers, staff on social media (you
rascals know who you are), and lovely people
kind enough to do stuff with us



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What is a public library?

So glad you asked! It might sound like a silly question, but libraries are changing and the answer isn't the same as it used to be. Lots of folks still hear "books, carpet from the 1970s, and old ladies shushing you" when you say "library," and that might even be true in some places (sorry not sorry, academia). That's not us, though!

We're a PUBLIC library, and that means we're stepping in to fill the space left behind by ideas like community centers. Sure, there are books on our shelves (and always will be), but that's just where it starts: we belong to our whole community—whoever that is—and our job is to ensure they see themselves on those shelves, in our hallways, as part of our programs...everywhere, really!

That means we do programming like children's storytimes that support early literacy and sensory development, classes that teach new and heritage skills (like using the internet or knitting a sweater), and more. It means we provide a place that bridges the gap between our neighbors and the services they might need, from healthcare to mental wellness, family planning, food security, leisure, learning, or whatever else is out there. It means being a home for a "library of things" like toys, tools, seeds, and so on. It means protecting the freedom to learn, think, and grow, no matter what anyone says or does.

Mostly, that means we act as a "third space" where Rowan county can go and find something worthwhile without being expected to pay for the privilege.



Words that
describe us

FREE

shared

community!

Open,

Kind,

FUN

supportive

Words that
shouldn't

exclusive

snobby

Boring.

INDIFFERENT

STALE

Plain!

Empty.



You're just full of great questions, aren't you? When somebody uses an arcane, corporate-sounding term like "library stakeholders," who does it make you think of? Probably "taxpayers" or, if you're feeling generous, "patrons." The real answer is...well, EVERYBODY! All the people in our community (and a lot of folks from neighboring communities) have a vested interest in the library, and that means WE ought to have a vested interest in THEM and their well-being.



I'm 28 and a working mom with a lot on her plate! Sometimes I just need a place to go where the kids and I can enjoy ourselves together, or at least at the same time. Since I don't have full control over my own schedule, I'm always looking for new hobbies and entertainment that fit into my lifestyle and my budget!

I'm 16, which means I'm still figuring myself out. Other people's expectations can be frustrating, and I need somewhere I can be independent and take ownership of what I enjoy and what I want to learn! Acceptance is really important to me...and sometimes I have questions I don't want to discuss with friends or family.





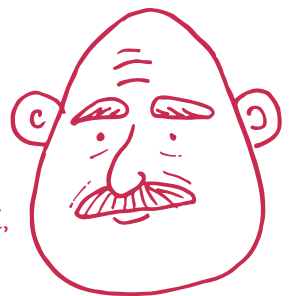
At 75, I'm still getting used to email and Facebook. My grandkids got me a "smart" phone, but I need a little extra patience and understanding with all these gadgets! Accessibility matters, too; I can take the bus or ask for a bookmobile visit, and it's all free! That's even better than clipping coupons.

I'm only 6, so everything's an adventure to me! I need a place where I can try new things, learn all kinds of stuff, and meet other kids like me. Sometimes I just want a fun place to go and be myself, whether that's loud or quiet or somewhere in between, and know that I'm safe the whole time.



I'm 32, between jobs, and thinking about going back to school. I'm not always sure what resources or services I'm eligible for, so I need someone to help connect me with local organizations and assistance. I've got a lot of questions and there's so much conflicting information out there, I can't always navigate it alone!

I'm 51 and own a small business, but don't really have a proper home office. Occasionally, I need someplace to work on things like taxes. I understand technology, but I'm not always on the cutting edge. I'd LIKE to be, though! And since I'm thinking about retirement, I'm really interested in new hobbies to pursue in my spare time.



I'm 18 and graduating from high school, so I'm getting ready for college. Or vocational school. Or neither. Or maybe I'll start my own small business on, like, Etsy! I don't know yet; in fact, I may need help figuring out what's best for me and how to go about it, since I know just enough to know that I don't know everything!

As both a community service and a “third space,” we never want to sound too stuffy, outdated, or standoffish. Whether we’re totally hip and cool is for our friends and neighbors to decide; our job is to give it our best shot to be fun and approachable.

If you aim for 100% every time, you usually land somewhere in the high 90s even when you mess up, and that’s more than okay!

What do we sound like?

Remember: We want to be a destination! When somebody asks what there is to do around here, hopefully they’ll think of us. If we’re all “institutional” and too academic, nobody will want to hang out.

1. Our “voice” is straightforward, plain-spoken, and human. You’re a person, not a building or an agency! Act like one and don’t make a habit of setting your own identity aside to be “the library.” We’re part of the community, and that’s who folks should be talking to when they interact with us.
2. Our services are always explained in the simplest terms. If your mom or grandpa couldn’t understand what’s being said or written, then that isn’t the library voice.
3. Humor is important! Not so much one-liners (although bad puns are allowed, in moderation), but just being gently funny or witty. We’re going for a sort of “I could be friends with them IRL” energy. If you aren’t current on slang like that, by the way, that’s fine; that’s funny in its own way, so own it.
4. We don’t use technical jargon outside the office. Keep in mind that WE know what stuff like “OPAc” means, but the average visitor doesn’t. To them, it’s “the book search computer.”
5. Just be nice! Never neg or criticize on social media, etc. Keep it positive!



our logo is one of our most valuable assets (and one of our hardest workers). We must treat it nicely, so never abuse it! It doesn't have any arms and it can't fight back. Plus, workman's comp is bound to be weird.

our logo is basically the same everywhere we use it, no matter whether that's in print or online somewhere. It uses our whole color palette, it's bright and easy to see, it's recognizable (if we're doing our jobs), and most important of all, it's a friendly symbol. Think of it like a big "welcome" sign. Books belong to everybody, and every book has a page for someone, sort of dealio. You get it.



Rowan County Public Library

Our colors

If you don't know which color to use, use this one! It's for everybody.

Blue Skies

Pantone 285
CMYK 75/44/0/0
RGB 48/180/226
HEX 30B4E2



See? A page for everyone in every book, like we said. This palette is inspired by our community: St. Claire red, Vikings green, DOVES purple, MSU gold, and the blue sort of averages the colors from our old logo, MSU's, and—you know what? It's complicated, never mind.

Yellow Brick Road

Pantone 1495
CMYK 0/48/87/0
RGB 248/152/48
HEX F8983A



for kids' stuff

Plus ultra violet

Pantone 2587
CMYK 58/78/0/0
RGB 127/84/162
HEX 7F54A2



for seniors (55+)

Green Light

Pantone 362
CMYK 80/15/85/2
RGB 41/156/90
HEX 299C5A



for teens
(it rhymes)

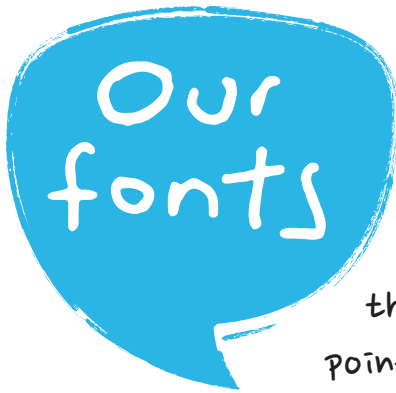
Well Red

Pantone 703
CMYK 16/96/62/3
RGB 201/45/80
HEX C92D50



for adults

This color combo is also Adobe-certified colorblind safe and ADA-compliant. Yay!



Also known as typefaces, if you happen to be feeling extra office worker-y or something. You can use any old fonts you like when you're not doing library stuff. For times when you ARE doing library stuff, there's these. Please use them. We paid for them and it's basically rude not to at this point. Unless you're a community partner rather than staff, in which case you can probably be forgiven, but you're on thin ice.

Cocogoose

It's chunky, it's round, it's our logo font, it's Cocogoose! Or Cocogoose Pro, if you're addressing it formally. This one's great for important announcement headers or titles on official stuff, like letterhead, business cards, and notes to your mom. We love you, mom.

Try to use this one kind of sparingly so it keeps its impact. If people see it all the time on every little thing, it stops feeling important, which is sad. If you need them, Cocogoose comes in like 7 different weights (plus *italics*!).

Noto Sans

Hello, Noto! Noto is our "business" font. Not that we're wearing a lot of suits around here. This one should be your general-purpose font for documents; it's good for just about anything, and it's designed to be extra readable on a screen as well as in print.

Homemade Apple

When you need a friendly cursive font, this is your guy. Just look at it. It's like your grandma left you a sweet little note in your lunchbox. You might not want to write quite this much with it all the time, though. It's best for headlines.

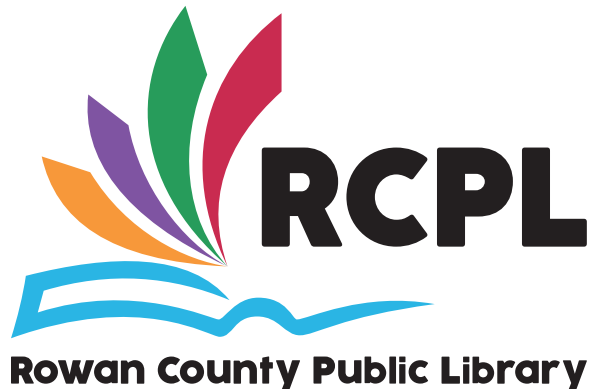
PERMANENT MARKER

WE USE A LOT OF PAINT SPATTERS AND ELEMENTS WITH A HAND-DRAWN LOOK IN OUR STUFF, AND PERMANENT MARKER IS A FUN, CHUNKY FONT THAT PLAYS NICE WITH ALL THAT AND DOES A GOOD JOB OF SHOWING THROUGH. IT'S VERY READABLE AT LARGE SIZES, SO FEEL FREE TO PLASTER IT ALL OVER THINGS WHEN YOU WANT TO CATCH SOME ATTENTION, BUT YOU'RE GOING FOR A MORE RELAXED VIBE. KIDS LOVE THIS ONE.

(secret bonus marketing fonts used in this doc are Nanum Pen and Ugly Dave, so def use them, too)

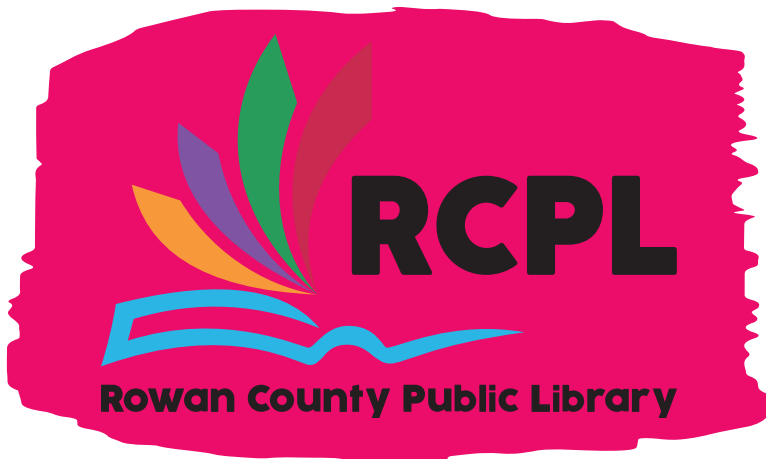
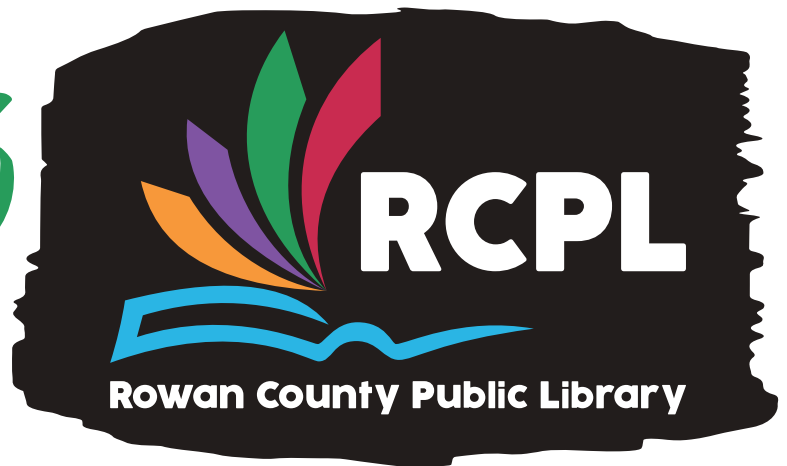
It's okay sometimes to wear one green sock and one orange sock. If that's your style, you'll probably look good in it because you FEEL good in it. Our logo is like that, except it can't feel confidence and therefore we're responsible for making sure it looks good. Take a sec and think about how you're applying it: Remember that it needs to be distinct and easily identifiable by the people who'll be looking at it. Marketing isn't for US, it's for the person who sees the poster, reads the brochure, or visits the website. Are THEY going to think it looks good? If yes, then fine. If no, change socks!

Logo dos
and don'ts

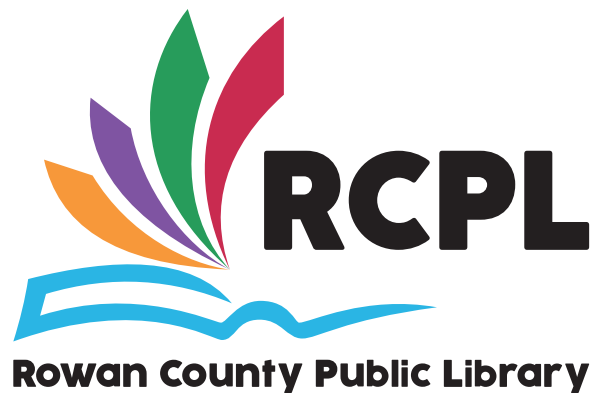


good great yes

awesome wow cool



EW UGH NO BOO HISS WHYYYYYYY



Try and leave the logo some breathing room whenever it's possible.

Don't crowd it, and let it stand out next to other logos and so on. Avoid tacky color combos! Somebody's first reaction to it shouldn't be for their eyes to start watering.



If you can't avoid a photo or similarly busy background, then use the negative version of our logo. It works in any solid color from our palette; just pick the one that goes best with whatever's going on behind it.

Don't reverse the logo from backgrounds that are too light or cluttered, and if you need to make it all one color, be sure to use one from our palette (the blue is best). Black and white go with everything, so if none of our official colors work for some reason, try those!



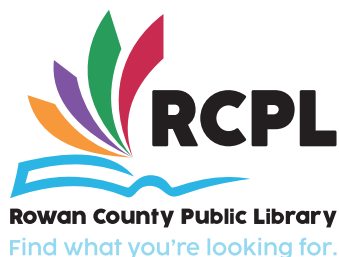
“Find what you’re looking for.”

Our
strapline

call it a slogan, tagline, elevator pitch, whatever. If someone doesn’t know who we are or what the library does, this is their first, clear explanation; it tells people what we do and what they can expect in a single phrase.

Most of the time (especially on promotional stuff that’s going outside the library, like posters hung in local businesses or flyers handed out at school), our logo should be paired with our strapline. It’s not always practical, so use your best judgment, but try to fit them both in there together when you can.

The strapline is set in our logo and title font, cocogoose Pro. Don’t use any other font for it without prior permission! When it’s next to our logo, it should usually be in the same soft black as our acronym or in a 50% shade of the blue from our branding palette, depending on what looks best. If you’re using a solid-color or negative version of the logo, though, try and use a 50% shade of that same color (whichever one it is).





Our style

The library's brand is fun, vibrant, and friendly. We want people to know there's a real person behind any and all marketing we do! Wherever possible, it should look lively and even a little messy (in a way that's still readable and clearly communicates the intended message). Write it, hand-draw it, paint it, smear it, just don't use AI-generation or hard cutout shapes. We like blobs and rounded corners!

That's why you'll see a lot of ink blots and paint splatters in our stock elements (which are there whenever you need them). Use this manual as a guide to help you get a feel for what our social media posts, web banners, and so on ought to look like. Things don't always have to be perfectly centered or exactly even—learn to let go!

A public library measures success by the number of lives it positively impacts. We're part of a real flesh-and-blood community, and that's something to celebrate!



Sharing in our community

We're in a position of privilege: our friends and neighbors value and support us, and they show it every day by using our services. Many of them go out of their way to tell us, too! That means we've got a steady supply of genuine stories to share; there's no need to make up something pithy when a patron has already given you something heartfelt.

Tell these stories! Wherever possible, use actual patron quotes and photos (with permission, of course). To paraphrase Scott Cook: "A brand isn't what we say it is—it's what people tell each OTHER it is." The best advertising is creating a sense of investment for the community, so love them back!

We love y'all, too.

3yo: "Where are you going?"

Librarian: "To get more snacks."

3yo: "But...I love you."

That's Dr. Seuss Day for ya.

A little girl at the front desk asked why our sign had so much written "on its behind." When we told her it was a Summer Reading message, she looked at us like 🤪 and naruto-ran away.

Just another day at your public library. ♡

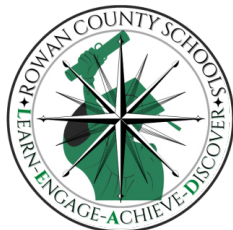
We work with lots of people and other organizations who help get the word out about the library and what we do. That's awesome, because teaming up with them means we can do even cooler stuff than usual.

If we're co-branding on promotional materials, it isn't about whose logo gets to be biggest; it's about showing our audience that the partnership is a happy one and everybody's glad to be there.

Friends & partners

When you're pairing partner logos with our own, always put ours at the bottom right of the page. If it's digital material (like a web banner or social media announcement), you don't have to use the strapline. If it's standalone printed stuff like flyers or posters, try really hard to use the strapline and only leave it out if you've got no other good choices.

Other than that, use an appropriate choice from our fonts and snag yourself an ampersand to go between the logos. Always leave the width of the R in "RCPL" between whatever ampersand you're using and a logo, no matter whose it is, and try to make all the logos about the same height if you can.



Questions? comments?
Humorous anecdotes?

You can find this manual on our website at
rowancountylibrary.org/pr
along with logos, media packages, and more
marketing stuff like that.