

An Irish Country Doctor Great Read, Great Gift!

Perhaps it's because I'm Irish that "An Irish Country Doctor" made me pass up dinner and miss a favorite television show, but Celt or not, here's a novel that will grab your heartstrings and never let you go until the very last page.

Author Patrick Taylor, an M.D. himself, at one time wrote a column, "Stitches," for The Journal of Medical Humour so he knows about which he writes in this hilarious book. It's all about a young M.D., fresh out of school with a spanking-new medical degree, who finds his first employment in a mythical village out in the emerald hills and glens of Northern Ireland. He jumps at the chance to secure a position as an assistant in a small rural practice. At least until he meets Dr. Fingal Flahertie O'Reilly. The older physician, whose motto is never let the patients get the upper hand, has his own way of doing things, which definitely takes some getting used to.

At first, our hero cannot decide if the pugnacious O'Reilly is the biggest charlatan he has ever met, or possibly the best teacher he could ever hope for. The book is

written with compassion and hilarity about a community whose inhabitants are as wonderful and loony as any on earth. The slightly daft old couple unable to marry for lack of a roof. A malingering Major and his equally hypochondriacal wife. And chapters more. As one critic put it, "Dr. Taylor conjures up the rural Irish town of Ballybucklebo that is a pleasure to visit and very difficult to leave."

With the holidays nearly upon us, "An Irish Country Doctor" is not only a great read but a wonderful gift. Highly recommended!

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DONOR

Development for Hospitals

Direct Mail Comes Out a Winner in Today's Communications Overload



By Jay Reardon

From the second America wakes until the time we shut off the lights and go to bed, we are hammered with thousands of messages. Phone calls, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, cable, email, Internet, billboards, signs, banners and bumper stickers. Clock radios, bedside television, conference calls, Blackberries, Bluetooth, iPods and iPhones that take pictures, give you a stock quote and tell you what the weather is in Bangladesh.

The old (2003) estimate that we're being bombarded by 2,500 commercial messages a day is probably short of the today's true overload. Google "lost circulation" and you get a litany of stuff about oil and gas drilling and not about the circulation you lose when you buy an advertisement or transmit a message without focus in today's media clutter. Seems like nobody including Google wants to think about it. But there are 13,476 radio stations in the U.S. and more television channels than anyone wants to think about. Go on vacation for a week and see how many emails have stacked up in your IN basket while you were away.

It's gotten so bad that the big challenge today is attention. Every day of our life we are surrounded by media competing for our attention, and now research shows that, as a culture, we are often trying to pay attention to more than one medium at a time. Linda Stone, former VP at Microsoft, has coined a name for it – Continuous Partial Attention. Ms. Stone says in our increasingly noisy world we feel obligated to stay on top of everything. As

a result, more than one-half of all people use multiple media types at the same time. For example, during TV primetime nearly 70 percent of people say they watch television, 43 percent say they go online and 22 percent say they read magazines. Stated more simply, at least 35 percent of those people are using more than one media type at the same time during primetime.

One-half of the 7,800 people researched say they have the radio on while reading magazines, and more than one-half say they read the newspaper while watching television.

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The highly vaunted The Kiplinger Letter states in their May 2008 issue, “Congress is likely to push a shift to electronic medical records, offering federal grants to help providers buy the necessary equipment and setting technical standards to ensure that systems are compatible.” ■

Bell Labs reportedly is working on a “telesensing” mobile phone that will measure the cellular waves bouncing off your body to track your heart rate, pulse and breathing pattern. Such a phone could dial 911 automatically when you’re having a heart attack, or it could even be used as a sophisticated baby monitor. ■

British scientists are developing a new type of glass that can dissolve and release calcium into the body. This will enable patients to regrow bones and could signal a move away from bone transplants. ■

These are not “hot off the press” and they probably cannot compete with John Grisham for holiday reading, but if you have an interest in the history of hospitals, you may find them interesting.

“Mending Bodies, Saving Souls: A History of Hospitals”
— Oxford University Press.

“The Care of Strangers: The Rise of America’s Hospital System”
— The Johns Hopkins University Press. ■

In a study of patients at Mayo’s Executive Health Program, 34 percent were identified as having a previously undiagnosed severe condition. ■

People ask us who we work with and where they’re located. We’re reluctant to hand out a client list, but we have the good fortune to work with some of America’s top and most widely recognized hospitals. Geographically, our hospital clients stretch from California to Maryland and from Montana to Arizona. And thanks to the electronic speed of email, we stay in close touch on a day-to-day basis with our development friends. ■

History Note: The United States Post Office Department was formed in July of 1775. Benjamin Franklin was the first Postmaster General. He was allowed an annual salary of one-thousand dollars. A local postmaster delivered mail to Revolutionary War soldiers by foot because he lacked money to buy a horse. ■

The United States Postal Service processes and delivers more than 212 billion pieces of mail every year. That’s 700 million pieces per day, 29 million per hour, 486,000 per minute or 8,000 per second! The USPS operates the largest civilian vehicle fleet in the world with more than 219,000 vehicles driving more than 1.2 billion miles each year. When fuel costs increase one penny, USPS fuel costs go up \$8 million annually. ■

Timing is Everything Even With Your Direct Mail List

Like many things in life, timing is important in direct mail. It’s important for us to be sure a prospect receives our direct mail message at the most opportune time—day of the week, week of the month, month of the year. Our spring programs are timed to avoid possible conflicts. And, of course, while our fall mailings are well before the holidays, they invariably contain a reference to the year-end benefits of tax-deductible giving.

Setting a mail date for your campaign is very important for a number of reasons. It all starts with selection of the most desirable mailing list. And what appears to be obvious turns out to be just that—we have found lists of direct mail donors to healthcare causes (heart, cancer, lung, etc.) are most productive for our work with hospitals. The first question a list broker will ask us is “When is your mail date?” They ask because they usually grant us about a two-week period in which to mail. If we miss that period and overlap with someone else using the list, the list broker can deny us their list for future mailings. If we worked with marginally good lists such danger probably would not exist, but we strongly prefer and insist on the best lists available. ■



Bioinformatics—A Word You May Soon Find Among Your Capital Needs!

Technology is a terrific boon to medical research. Right? Well, yes and no. With all that data coming at us faster than a speeding bullet also comes some problems. Like how do we handle the monstrous pile of intel that keeps growing down the hall like some giant mushroom from outer space?

In 420 BC when Hippocrates of Cos declared that diseases had natural causes and put forth the Hippocratic Oath, marking the birth of medicine in the West, a medical library consumed a pretty short shelf. Centuries later, in 1553, when Spanish physician Miguel Serveto described the circulation of blood through the lungs and was burned at the stake for such thoughts there still wasn’t much known about medicine. Much later, when Jonas Salk developed the first polio vaccine, the huge breakthrough had not yet taken place. Today the overwhelming volume of computerized medical research, data and information has leapfrogged into disbelief, so much so they’ve invented a word for how they plan to handle it all. Bioinformatics.

Why worry about it? Well, our mission is to reach out and find new donors in behalf of our hospital clients because donations are not possible without donors. Adding to your donor list is vital to your fund raising efforts. But people move. They find new philanthropic causes. They die. And equally challenging to your work is the budgetary fact that the dollars you need today will be dwarfed by what you could need in the future. Not just because of inflation but by the squeeze of new

Direct Mail is a Winner! – Continued from page 1

A mom told us recently that her daughter was in the habit of text-messaging her from the next room. Until mom put a stop to it. Much of the \$175 billion of advertising messages that are placed each year are done so on the assumption that those messages will get the undivided attention of their target audiences. Not so. How much is enough? Well, more than 50 million have signed up for the national do-not-call list but thanks to electronic ingenuity, the messages just keep piling up.

All this brings up our case for direct mail. A story that relief pitcher Valverde of the Houston Astros is leading the National League in saves goes unnoticed by a huge percentage of readers who couldn’t care less. That’s lost circulation. Diminishing reach. However, unlike mass

techniques and technology in the massive revolution that has taken place just in the past several decades. Now here comes bioinformatics to the rescue. But the cost might be as long as the name.



Bioinformatics is the process for collecting massive quantities of information in large, organized databases and then processing that information with advanced computer technology to analyze and interpret the data in just about anyway imaginable.

Mathematicians, statisticians, biologists, chemists and computer scientists team up to analyze data to solve mysteries and identify common denominators in disease. Thus they use bioinformatics to advance the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of many diseases.

The field of bioinformatics has exploded in the last decade as a result of decoding the human genome. While it promises to solve many medical problems, it will place new taxation on budgets, whether the bioinformatics is done in-house or otherwise. ■

media, with direct mail you can tailor the list and focus the message. Expertly packaged and creatively prepared, the direct mail message is not something that gets lost in peripheral attention. And the direct mail appeal letter we send for our hospital clients is personally addressed and written with a specific audience in mind. That’s focus.

In today’s dot-com world, response is directly tied to attention. Direct mail goes directly to the best prospects we can find. It is personally addressed which no Internet ad, no newspaper article, no radio commercial, no TV spot or no billboard can achieve. And when the day is done you can measure what it cost and what it did. You might say it has a bigger chance of getting a prospective donor’s complete attention. ■