

The Open Sidewalk Project

A living archive of stories in motion

Discover • Reflect • Set Free • Mark the Moment



35 Creative Ways to Promote



Open Sidewalk Project

Beyond Bulletin Board Cards

From simple bookmarks to flash mob releases—
creative, actionable ideas to spread the movement
and invite people to experience OSP firsthand.



THE KEY INSIGHT

The best promotion for OSP isn't advertising—it's participation.

- Every book released = a promotion
- Every journey tracked = a testimonial
- Every person who finds a book = an advocate

Start with what feels authentic to you. Start with what's possible in your community. Start small, document it, share it, scale what works.

This guide presents 35 creative ways to promote The Open Sidewalk Project—from zero-cost to low cost tactics you can implement today to ambitious campaigns that create viral moments. Pick what matches your resources, creativity, and community.



PHYSICAL WORLD PROMOTIONS

1. Bookmarks as Invitations

What: Leave OSP bookmarks inside library books, bookstore browsing copies, Little Free Libraries.

Message: "Found between the pages? So are the best stories."

Cost: Low (~\$0.05-0.10 each)

Why it works: Reaches readers at the perfect moment when they're already engaged with books

2. Sidewalk Chalk Art

What: Draw book trails, quotes, QR codes in parks and public spaces.

Example: "Free book ahead →" with arrow pointing to bench

Cost: \$5-10 (sidewalk chalk)

Why it works: Eye-catching, Instagram-worthy, temporary (no permanent vandalism concerns)

3. Stickers & Decals

What: "Books Are Magic in Motion" or "I Set Stories Free" badges for laptops, water bottles.

Cost: ~\$0.15-0.30 each

Why it works: Turns participants into walking billboards; laptop stickers in coffee shops = passive promotion

4. Little Free Library Partnerships

What: Partner with LFL stewards to promote OSP, create designated "OSP hub" libraries.

Approach: Email stewards with partnership offer and materials

Why it works: Natural partnership—already established book-sharing infrastructure and engaged stewards

5. Business Card Invitations

What: Professional cards to leave at coffee shops, bookstores, libraries.

Front: "Found a book you loved? Set it free."

Back: QR code + opensidewalkproject.org

Cost: ~\$0.02-0.05 each (bulk 500-1000)

6. Window Clings for Businesses

What: "We support the Open Sidewalk Project - Books released here welcome"

Target: Bookstores, coffee shops, libraries, waiting rooms

Cost: ~\$3-8 per cling

7. Bookplate Inserts for Authors

What: Authors include OSP info in books they sell/gift.

Impact: Every book sold = potential OSP participant

Target: Self-published authors, indie authors at events

8. Yard Signs for Release Events

What: "FREE BOOKS - Take one. Read it. Pass it forward."

Use: Book swap events, yard sales, outside Little Free Libraries

Cost: ~\$5-15 per sign



DIGITAL & ONLINE PROMOTIONS

9. Instagram Filter / Facebook Frame

What: Custom AR filter with floating books or "I Set Stories Free" badge.

Cost: Free (if you can create it)

Why it works: Every use exposes OSP to that person's entire network

10. QR Code Stickers

What: Small stickers to add to books you already own.

Process: Order stickers → Apply to your books → Register online → Release when ready

Cost: ~\$0.03-0.08 each

11. Book Influencer Partnerships

What: Partner with BookTok, Bookstagram, BookTube creators.

Pitch: "Release 10 copies of your favorite book, track their journey, create content series"

Reach: 10K-1M+ followers per influencer

12. Email Signature

What: Add OSP line to every email you send.

Example: " Set a book free today | opensidewalkproject.org"

Cost: Free, zero effort after initial setup

13. Book Club Challenge

What: Viral challenge—release all books after club meeting, track for 6 months.

Why it works: Built-in peer pressure, multiplier effect (8-15 books per club)

14. Virtual Book Release Map

What: Interactive map showing real-time releases with clickable pins.

Features: Click pins to see stories, heat map of active cities

Impact: Makes abstract concept concrete and visually compelling

15. Podcast Tour

What: Appear on book-related podcasts to discuss OSP.

Target: Book review podcasts, indie author shows, literacy advocates

Cost: Free (your time)



COMMUNITY & EVENT PROMOTIONS

16. Book Release Flash Mobs

What: 20-50 people release 100+ books simultaneously in one area.

Example: "100 Books Set Free in Downtown Portland in One Hour"

Why it works: Scale creates visibility, highly newsworthy

17. Library Partnership Programs

What: Official partnerships with public libraries.

Includes: OSP info at checkout desk, library-branded bookplates, monthly release events

Reach: Each library serves thousands of patrons

18. Coffee Shop "Book & Brew" Partnerships

What: Monthly book release events (First Saturday of every month).

Benefits: Brings customers in, differentiates from chains, builds community

Cost: Zero for coffee shop

19. School & University Programs

What: Book exchange projects, first-year orientation activities, service learning.

Scale: One school = hundreds of student releases

Educational value: Teaches generosity, data tracking, reflective writing

20. "Blind Date with a Book" Events

What: Books wrapped in paper with only genre listed, all OSP-registered.

Why it works: Mystery/gamification, Instagram-worthy presentation, creates curiosity

21. Corporate Office Book Swaps

What: Companies adopt OSP for internal book sharing programs.

Pitch: "Build company culture with zero budget"

Potential: Large companies = thousands of employees = massive scale

22. Author Book Tour Integration

What: Authors release signed copies as OSP books during tours.

Why authors love it: Extended reach beyond event attendees, creates buzz, trackable impact

23. Senior Center Programs

What: Seniors release meaningful books with personal notes about their lives.

Why it works: Sense of legacy, intergenerational connection, combats isolation

Scale: 11,000+ senior centers in US

24. Festival & Fair Booths

What: Information booths at book festivals, art fairs, farmers markets.

Activities: Immediate on-site releases, photo ops, "guess where this book will go" games

Why it works: Face-to-face interaction converts better than digital

25. Geocaching Integration

What: Books as geocaching treasures with OSP trackable codes.

Why geocachers love it: Physical treasure (not just logbook), double tracking satisfaction

Reach: 3+ million active geocachers worldwide



CONTENT & STORYTELLING

26. "Where's Your Book Now?" Series

What: Weekly social media series tracking specific books over time.

Format: Show entire journey from release to discovery to next release, interview finders

Why it works: Creates narrative arc, proves concept works, deeply engaging

27. Book Journey Videos

What: 60-90 second documentary-style videos showing complete book journeys.

Distribution: YouTube, Instagram Reels, TikTok

Why it works: Video is most engaging format, highly shareable emotional content

28. Annual Report / Impact Story

What: Beautiful designed report showing total books released, cities reached, longest journey.

Example stat: "10,000 books traveled 2.5 million miles across 47 states"

Why it works: Shows scale and impact, attracts press coverage, shareable infographics

29. Participant Spotlight Series

What: Feature different participants weekly on social media.

Content: Why they joined, most memorable story, photos of releases

Why it works: Creates aspirational, relatable content; participants share their features

30. User-Generated Content Campaigns

What: Monthly themed hashtag campaigns.

Themes: #MyFirstRelease, #FarthestJourney, #WhereIFound, #BookThatFoundMe

Prizes: Feature on main account, OSP swag

Why it works: Participants create promotional content for you



GUERRILLA & CREATIVE

31. Reverse Graffiti

What: Clean designs/messages into dirty walls, sidewalks, tunnels.

Message: "Free book ahead →" or "Stories are magic in motion"

Why it works: Legal (you're cleaning, not vandalizing), attention-grabbing, eco-friendly

32. Book Benches

What: Decorated benches with weatherproof book boxes attached.

Location: Parks, bus stops, busy pedestrian areas

Why it works: Permanent installation, combines utility with purpose, beautiful photo op

33. Projection Guerrilla Marketing

What: Project OSP messages onto buildings at night.

What to project: Giant QR codes, inspiring quotes, "Free books tonight at [location]"

Why it works: Unexpected, memorable, creates shareable content, generates buzz

34. Book Drops from Drones

What: Dramatic releases with books attached to small parachutes (where legal).

Why it works: Extremely shareable, newsworthy, unforgettable spectacle

Caution: Requires FAA compliance, safety considerations, event insurance

35. Pop-Up Book Release Stations

What: Temporary stations in high-traffic areas for 2-4 hours.

Includes: Table, branded signage, books with bookplates, on-site registration help

Where: Farmers markets, concert venues, downtown lunch hours, transit hubs

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Quick Wins (Start Here)

Low cost, immediate implementation, proven results:

-  Bookmarks in library books
-  Email signatures
-  Little Free Library partnerships
-  Business card distribution
-  Book club challenge

Medium Effort (Good ROI)

Moderate investment, sustainable long-term, strong community impact:

- Coffee shop partnerships
- Sticker campaigns
- Book influencer outreach
- School programs
- Festival booths

Big Swings (Potentially Viral)

Higher effort/cost, high visibility, can create breakthrough moments:

- Flash mob releases
- Interactive tracking map
- Book benches (permanent installations)
- Annual impact report with media push
- Drone drops (where feasible and legal)



FINAL THOUGHTS

These 35 ideas range from simple (bookmarks, email signatures) to spectacular (flash mobs, drone drops). The most effective promotions share three qualities:

1. **They invite experience, not just awareness.** People don't just hear about OSP—they participate immediately.
2. **They create stories worth sharing.** The best promotions generate user content that spreads organically.
3. **They feel authentic to the movement.** Tactics align with OSP values of trust, generosity, and connection.

Pick what resonates with you. Start with what you can do today. Document everything. Share the stories. Scale what works.

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Making books travel farther

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