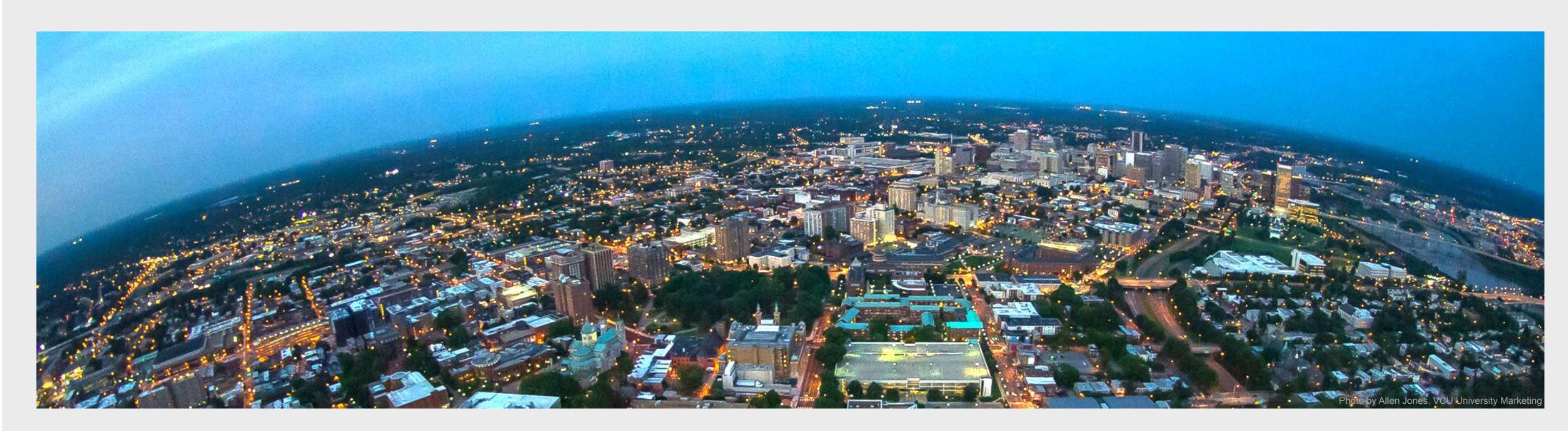# E-NEWSLETTERS
CAN YOU SPARE 2 HOURS?

Photo by Allen Jones, VCU University Marketing

Target Your Audience with Custom E-News

Outreach to faculty is an ongoing challenge at Virginia Commonwealth University. Starting in the 2014-15 academic year, Academic Outreach librarians partnered with the Communications and Public Relations office to pilot a system of streamlined, customized e-newsletters. Using a scalable template on an affordable email management platform allows liaisons to reach faculty with pointed, subject-based information.
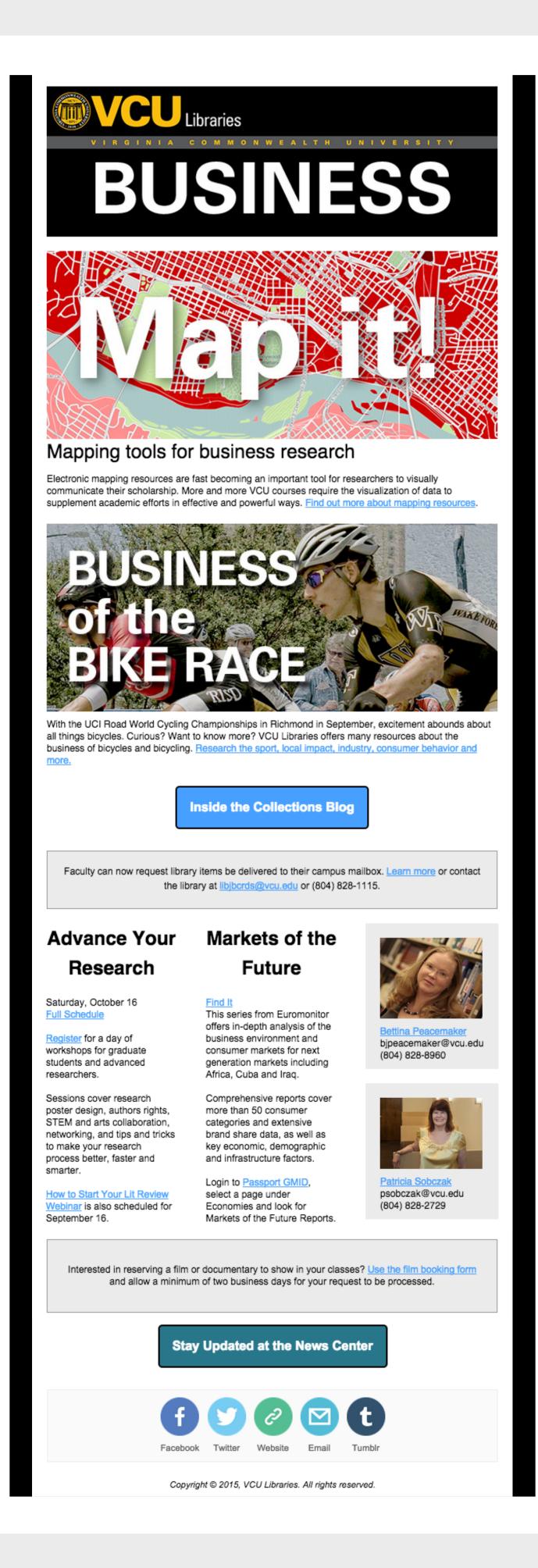
E-News in Three Steps

First → Plan

- Choose publication date
- Outline content
- Share with PR
- Update your email list

Second → Write

- Find existing copy (from news, events, etc)
- Write/research/prepare copy
- Follow library style standards
- Review and revise

Third → Publish

- Input copy into template
- Test and share
- Get final approval from department head(s)
- Publish
- Review analytics

Pilot a Success

- Eight subject-based newsletters over three semesters
- Built strong lists with very few "unsubscribes"
- Most response (clicks) to feature stories
- Average open rate (48 percent) is above industry average
- Five percent click through rate, but content is skimmable, so clicks may not be best measure of impact
- Process streamlined into a three step process to maximize efficiency

Future Plans

- More liaison areas and broader themes like Scholarly Communications
- More interaction with more built in feedback and calls to action

Tips for e-newsletters

- **Create** a simple template with imagery for visual appeal. Standardize design for scalability and efficiency-- and also a consistent identity.
- **Think** about your audience. Review analytics and consider what your faculty need to plan ongoing content.
- **Write** stories with succinct language and consistent tone. Use a "less is more" approach with links to details, articles, guides, forms, or other "calls to action."
- **Coordinate** with colleagues for content that is intentionally and strategically developed to work across platforms--collections blog, website features, and social media.
- **Educate** audiences about resources or services that matter to their research, learning, and scholarship.

Patricia Sobczak
psobczak@vcu.edu

Bettina Peacemaker
bjpeacemaker@vcu.edu

Martha Roseberry
mroseberry@vcu.edu

Sue Robinson
srobinson26@vcu.edu