

Branding, Marketing, and Fund-raising

Bonnie A. Osif

Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are.
—Jean-Anthelme Brillat Savarin

For God loves a cheerful giver.

—2 Corinthians 9:7

Why do individuals support a particular organization with their time, talents, and financial resources and not others? There are probably many theories and reasons; however at the core is probably an element of identification with the goals, the mission, or the philosophy of that organization. Loyal alumni of universities will paint themselves in school colors, wear gaudy clothing, and shout slogans long past their college days. Politics, crazy hats, and buttons go hand in hand during conventions. Clubs and associations often have distinguishing (and often wild) garb, yet the adherents have no hesitation to wear something representing the group that they would never wear otherwise. This is done to show support and membership with a group that provides identity, or a definition of self.

There are fields of study devoted to identity theory. Identity shows similarity with some and difference from others. It indicates association with a group or an ideology. Who or what is identified with can define the person to one degree or another. While some identification can be very superficial, narrowly and incorrectly defining a person or group, others also can be a complex and accurate depiction of the values and guiding principles of a group or individual. A person may be a strong advocate of a university football team and have season tickets for years, yet also have an overwhelming, if less noticeable identification with the academic success of the faculty and students. It is that type of identification, less obvious, less dramatic, but more deeply held, that can very accurately define a person. It is this identification that often motivates service and support. While money and service may be given to an organization for other reasons (political or social expedience, coercion) strong, personal identification can result in voluntary, cheerful giving, making the task of fund-raising

much easier. There are many issues that affect identification with an organization. Fund-raisers and public relations people need to consider these complex image and marketing issues in their work as well as the role that all in the organization play in creating the public face.

Marketing and promotion may not be natural activities for most librarians. Most schools did not teach these classes, nor are these necessarily areas of interest for many librarians. What drew them to the profession is more likely to be the love of books, information, teaching, and research rather than selling and promotion. If those were their primary academic interests, they probably would have majored in business and sought a career in public relations, marketing, or advertising. For many the very thought of selling might result in a shudder or cringe. There is a purity, a higher purpose to librarianship and a somewhat less high, less pure image to that of selling something, especially to someone who doesn't want that product. Isn't that why TiVo and similar products are so popular—we don't have to watch commercials, we can avoid the skills. If we are what we eat, we're also what we do and what we care about, and librarians don't see themselves as product pushers. However, maybe we've been misinterpreting what marketing is, and maybe we need to see how important it is. It can be done with the higher purpose of promoting something truly worthwhile.

Customer Driven and Results Oriented

As the librarian becomes increasingly invisible in the minds of the information users, the need for quality, well-planned, and well-delivered marketing is essential. Seiss provides an excellent primer for the librarian.¹ A short introduction lays the groundwork for our problem: ubiquity of the Internet, end-user searching, virtualization of libraries, outsourcing, emphasis on the bottom line and downsizing, and the belief that everyone can find information are some mentioned. She then provides definitions for relevant terms from other experts as well as her own succinct and practical definitions: marketing—"determining who you serve and with what products"; publicity—"getting the word out that you can help people do their jobs better-



Bonnie A. Osif (bao2@psu.edu) is Assistant Engineering Librarian at Pennsylvania State University in University Park.

cheaper-faster”; public relations—“talking to people about their needs and your strengths”; and advocacy—“all of the above are combined to make sure we get the resources that we need to provide excellent information products and services to our customers.”²

Subsequent chapters develop each of these topics. The book is well referenced, practical, and easy to understand. Several case studies provide useful examples. A number of lists summarize important information, and quotes that begin each chapter and are scattered throughout the text pique interest. A must-read for all and a great introduction to the topic.

A series of articles in *Information Outlook* from the Special Libraries Association highlights the importance of marketing to its members. Gupta and Jambhekar note that the user is central to marketing and libraries need to partner with the users.³ The goal is to get “the right information to the right user at the right time,” thereby reducing barriers and empowering users.⁴ This improves their attitude toward the organization. “The public image of service is born primarily out of the experiences of the people who receive the service.”⁵ So the importance of developing that public image is vital. The authors note that “marketing library services is not a separate function—it belongs to everyone. It is a way of working and a way of living.”⁶ This short article has a number of important points to remember when considering marketing. Who are the customers? What services do they want? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the library and of competitors? Develop an understanding of the differences between your library and the competitors. Develop a marketing plan based on what has been learned. Communication to all employees and the value of a comprehensive marketing plan are emphasized.

Claggett reminds us to consider a serious effort at identifying the brand we will be marketing.⁷ It is important to think about who uses us, who the competitors are, and what we mean to people. This is a short article with little text and lots of lists. It helps the reader to focus clearly on what should be reviewed. There is no detail, but lots to consider that may encourage you to delve deeper with additional resources. There is no bibliography. Interesting but not essential. In a similar vein, Kassel’s short article provides lists of tips on marketing for librarians.⁸ She notes that this is an ongoing process that should be integrated into the work schedule. Interesting, but much is repeated in more detail elsewhere. The material might be used to introduce staff to the marketing process, as it is short and to-the-point.

Marketing Concepts for Libraries and Information Centers is an excellent start to learn about marketing and the library.⁹ For the librarian just coming to the topic of marketing—and, as noted, this is not an integral part of most library education—de Saez has performed an excellent service. Several hours spent with the book provides the background and terminology to read more advanced and detailed works or to understand the importance of

marketing and begin developing a marketing plan. Topics covered include mission statements, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) exercises, promotions, demographics, marketing in the digital age, image and identity, and the marketing plan. The layout is very reader-friendly, with numerous descriptive headers, bulleted lists, clear definitions, and references. The author notes:

The absolute key to successful strategic change, if libraries and information services are to prosper, is to focus on the user. Information consultants have no illusions on this score: a client who is not satisfied will go elsewhere. Professions in libraries and information services must put user commitment first on their list of priorities.¹⁰

Keeping this thought in mind, the book provides crucial advice for success “in the strong belief that marketing will make the difference that will ensure the survival, growth and development of library and information services.”¹¹ Strong words with the substance to deliver.

Understand the Customer

Blueprint for Your Library Marketing Plan delivers on its name.¹² The book will help provide the basic groundwork, planning, and implementation of a marketing strategy for your library. This is a practical, useful aid that should be on everyone’s bookshelf. Another important title is the CLIP Note entry *Marketing and Public Relations Practices in College Libraries*.¹³ Everyone familiar with CLIP Notes will recognize the compilation of documents and survey results. And last, if you want to attract people to the library, *Power Public Relations* provides a wealth of ideas that can be used in the library and on the Web.¹⁴ All three from ALA are must-have titles.

Susan Kent discusses the new roles of the public library and its director and the need to market the library.¹⁵ In addition to traditional skills (leadership, human relations, outreach, collection management, and so on), the role has expanded to include board development, strategic planning, fund raising, marketing, public relations, and political dynamics. She discusses the very important public perception of the role of the director as an honest, credible individual who understands the community and “can deliver the goods.”¹⁶ Fast reading and provides a public library viewpoint.

The Journal of Business Research published a special section on marketing in the nonprofit, arts, and social areas.¹⁷ Bennet and Sargeant provided an introduction to the section that is worth reading for its literature review. While not easy reading, it is beneficial for its introduction and discussion within the nonprofit environment. In the same issue MacMillan and coauthors provide a look at marketing from a business perspective.¹⁸ They describe

relationship marketing as an emphasis on “developing long-term supportive relationships with exciting customers,” and it is more beneficial to use energy and resources on this group rather attracting new customers.¹⁹ This scholarly, well-referenced article discusses and tests the Morgan Hunt model in a not-for-profit study. Heavy reading, but it has some strong implications for a library and deserves careful consideration for those very interested in marketing research.

Olson looks at value of information services.²⁰ She states “a value profile identifies the criteria people use to evaluate their exchanges with library,” and this information can provide useful insight to improve satisfaction with the library by understanding the specific features and services and marketing these.²¹ Discussing both the library and the competitors can yield valuable information. Branding is important; it “is a dynamic management system that uses disparate marketing tools and reconfigures them into a powerful strategy designed to create and affect the image perceptions and recall of the target audiences.”²² When people need information, what is the first thing they think? It should be you. A complete branding campaign can help that come true. It is more than a logo but includes the “brand name, personality, position, and credibility.”²³ It takes work, but the value of this process can be critical.

Service Is a Product

What is your library’s personality? Stating that “a brand is the personality of a product or a company,” Peebles discusses the importance of a brand in today’s society.²⁴ This article is fast, snappy reading and a good introduction to the topic. He ends with “a great brand tells the story of you that nobody knows, the story that continues to evolve as your organization evolves.”²⁵ We have great stories, both in print and in action. Branding can help us to get the story out. For more information, Rowley’s article is worth a quick look for its definitions and discussion of the value of branding.²⁶

Another title from SLA, “Think Like a Business, Act Like a Library,” provides the chillingly true statement, “Libraries are vital only if the community perceives them as vital.”²⁷ With the news of so many libraries closing and budgets threatened, this statement is a reality to many. Whether the user community is students, faculty, parents, children, teachers, executives, senior citizens, or any other group, that community needs to value their library if it is going to support it adequately. Stuhlman discusses public relations in a short, easy-to-understand article that is full of good ideas. Some are obvious (image, communication, expertise, goodwill) but still very important and worth reinforcing. Techniques borrowed from business (publicity, advertisements, give-aways, appearances, and so on) are briefly reviewed. A useful review.

Hall describes a survey of sixty-three universities from the American Association of Universities in the United States.²⁸ She notes that the highly successful public relations programs included successful building of relationships with donors, good strategic thinking, and quality research. As the study indicates several aspects in which higher education differs from the average non-profit fund raising activity, this is well worth a look.

There Is No Quick Fix

Library Administration and Management has looked at fund-raising and marketing issues often. Ruggiero and Zimmerman provide an excellent look at using staff in the fund-raising process.²⁹ Staff members know the library, have a vested interest in its success, and interact with the public. They are the face of the library and are a logical group that can be used in fund-raising. The section on the identification of potential donors using the knowledge of staff is especially cogent. This article has a number of suggestions that would work in improving fund-raising and increasing the success of the campaign. These suggestions also might go a long way toward increasing identification and buy-in, not only from the donors, but from library staff. An excellent article with great applications.

Deborah Lee’s Marketing 101 columns are a must read.³⁰ She has covered such topics as focus groups, surveys, and market segmentation. Add these to your regular reading list. Also check out marketing articles by Sarkisian and Gomez.³¹

There are a number of books on fund-raising in general as well as some focused on fund-raising in libraries. *Successful Fundraising: Case Studies in Academic Libraries* is an excellent resource that includes a dozen case studies with the stated purpose that it:

presents a comprehensive description of a significant activity or program which can be replicated in other settings. It provides sufficient detail to identify and analyze the time and place of the setting, the major participants, the issues and problems addressed, the constraints and opportunities faced by the participants, the sources of information consulted, the plan of action that was followed, and the resulting outcomes. . . . A good case study contains complete evidence, comprehensive explanations and sufficient factual information to assist others to replicate many, if not all, of the particulars of the case in another setting. . . . Finally, a good case study offers cogent advice, answers the readers’ questions, and provides opportunity for candid analysis and reflection.³²

While each case study is relatively short (nine to twenty pages), they do accomplish the goals set out

in the introduction and provide a great deal of useful information, new ideas, and encouragement. Well worth a look. Read a case study a day and take notes for local consideration.

Burlingame edits another look at fund raising that begins with a brief historical look at library support and the increasing need for new financial support.³³ The case studies reviewed look at different types of fund raising and different types of libraries. The twelve libraries included Davidson College, Tufts, Johns Hopkins, Atlanta-Fulton Public Library system, and others. Annual and capital campaigns, challenge grants, foundations, trusts, and endowments are reviewed. Very informative and worth a look.

Charts, forms, and bulleted lists highlight *Partnering with Purpose*.³⁴ Crowther and Trott look at several examples in which library partnerships have been used to enhance and expand library outreach and image. They take the reader step by step through the process in a clear, easy-to-follow guide. Read within the framework of some of the other books reviewed, this perspective provides a wealth of information and ideas that may be adapted successfully to a number of situations.

Many librarians would bristle at the mention that they are really marketing the library when they walk into a classroom, but Susan B. Ardis makes a compelling case for that argument.³⁵ No one will deny that the primary goal when asked to do an instruction session is to convey information about the resources and tools to help this particular class. Yet, it can also be argued that the library, librarians, staff, and services are also being marketed. To make her point Ardis has a chart comparing teaching and marketing. Fast reading and very intriguing.

Staff Is the Vital Link

"A customer service plan can improve customer relations and internal operations, and empower the frontline staff to meet customer needs."³⁶ Common in the business world, the authors state that a customer service plan can also add value to the library, as demonstrated at Wright State University Libraries in Dayton, Ohio. They also comment, "Companies known for high quality service, attention to detail, and a sincere interest in customer relations engineered their success through formal plans to ensure customer satisfaction."³⁷ It is not a stretch to consider the truth when the term library is substituted for the word for company. A great collection needs good service, and both can equal a satisfied customer and support of the library. So, a good customer service plan is important. This includes a customer service pledge—"a published statement, prepared after consultation with all staff, that articulates the intentions of the organization to provide meaningful and measurable levels of quality services"—and a plan that starts with surveys of customer wants and services to meet

them and includes training for staff.³⁸ This is an excellent, readable, and practical article with obvious application in the library. Must reading for all.

After so much heavy reading, Welch's easy-to-read article, "The Electronic Welcome Mat: The Academic Library Web Site as a Marketing and Public Relations Tool," takes us to a marketing tool that is right at our fingertips—the library Web page.³⁹ The Web page is a great way to deliver the library's message and promote fund-raising and "friendraising."⁴⁰ While most libraries have a link for donors on their homepage, this article might help you refine and expand the usefulness of that link. A short article that is well worth the time to read. For more information check out *Fundraising and Friend-Raising on the Web*.⁴¹ Somewhat dated, it is still a useful resource with many great ideas.

The Web links us to a number of sites that can be useful in marketing, branding, and fund-raising. The American Library Association has a number of links worth reviewing. The Issues and Advocacy page has a number of links to promotional materials and articles that are worth bookmarking.⁴² ALA's *Library Advocate's Handbook* is available online.⁴³ Use the search box to find relevant pages at the site, as items are also located under a number of the sections.

It seems like a dream that there was a time when the librarian needed to worry about getting the wealth of materials flooding in cataloged and on the shelf rapidly; needed to worry about finding the right resources for projects and papers; didn't need to worry too much about public image, fund-raising, and what brand label was being placed on the library by one of the myriad user groups. Or was that time a dream that never was? Even if there was a time when budgets were more than adequate, the public image of the library has always been an issue. The brand might have changed from that shushing, sensible shoes stereotype (that was probably never really accurate), and the role of fund-raising might be more obvious, but these are issues that have always lurked somewhere. Now, with greater importance, these topics are receiving serious study and careful consideration so all can benefit. The library, real and virtual, has a great deal to offer society. Instead of becoming marginalized, it is central. Our mission, if we choose to accept it, is to be sure that message gets out.

What causes a giver to give cheerfully? There can be many reasons, but the altruistic one of identifying with an organization that performs a public good should make the giver quite happy. And could we not paraphrase Brillat-Savarin and say that what you give to, what groups you support with time and money, says a great deal about who you are? Believing this message, library personnel can easily market the importance of supporting their library in its marketing and fund-raising endeavors. Who would not want to be identified with the information, knowledge-rich library?

Author's note: Headers are taken from Susan Wehmeyer, Dorothy Auchter, and Arnold Hirshon, "Saying What

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