

Marketing: Making a Case for Your Library

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Barbara Weiner, MLS
Hazelden Library and Information
Resources. Center City, Minn.,
bweiner@hazelden.org

What is library marketing?

Marketing is both theory and process. Much has been written about general marketing. Traditionally, marketing has been looked at as the "four Ps": product, place, promotion, and price (1). These four Ps are found throughout marketing literature. When writing about library marketing specifically, author Darlene Weingand adds two more P's: prelude (marketing audit) and postlude (evaluation) for a total of six steps.

These six steps can be put into practical application.

Library marketing defined

A planned approach to identifying, attracting, serving and gaining support of specific user groups in a manner that furthers the goals of the library and the organization that supports it (2). (For more marketing definitions, consult the accompanying bibliography.) A common thread in these definitions is quality customer service (as opposed to collection caretaking), community involvement ("community" and customer networking), and anticipating and thriving on current and future changes, all liberally sprinkled with professional excitement.

Why market libraries?

Why should we take time out of our busy professional and private lives to market libraries?

There are no cold hard statistics, such as: following marketing efforts, libraries can expect a 25% increase in their targeted services. In fact, marketing as applied to libraries is a fairly recent phenomenon. Our country was founded with a belief in libraries as storehouses of information. Times have changed. Today's libraries have increasing "competition" from end user access, purchasing (rather than borrowing) resources, and the Internet.

Even without statistical backup, reasons to market libraries are twofold:

First, common sense dictates that in an environment of increased customer options, we need to advertise what libraries offer. In the retail world, the most wonderful product available will not reach its customers if no one knows of its existence.

Second, yesterday's social support for libraries falters with today's new economic priorities, social change and technological innovations (3). It's no longer enough for libraries to be available. Librarians must know what customers want and then let them know that their needs can be met through their libraries.

Today, library marketing cannot be separated from good library management practice. Library marketing is good library management practice (4).

How do we start marketing?

Guy St. Clair states that meeting with management is the first step in beginning a marketing plan (5).

Nothing influences libraries as much as the mission and beliefs of an organization's management. Primarily, management influences the resources and services offered, as well as customers targeted. Libraries must be in line with management and organizational goals before planning formal marketing strategies.

Finding a dollar value for library services and resources.

One of the strongest marketing tools a library can use is the ability to put a dollar value on the resources and services a library provides to its organization.

Value is added when library users are "changed" for having used library services and resources, allowing them to become more knowledgeable and empowered in decision making. Management and organizational culture need to realize this is the kind of value libraries can provide.

A library may be under pressure to "prove" its value to the organization. Such value should be presented in dollar figures, so the library competes fairly with other divisions in the eyes of financial controllers and executive management.

Extensive statistics of library use and activities do not reflect a dollar value of worth, the quality of service, or if library activities met organizational needs. A dollar value is difficult to assign to a piece of information shared, but not impossible!

Four basic steps are needed to find a bottom line for library services and resources.

1. Find cost data for operating information services.
2. Collect user estimates of the value of beneficial library services.
3. Record narrative accounts of library impact.
4. Analyze the cost and benefits of information gathered and determine cost-benefit ratios to provide a return on investment (ROI) figure.

Alison Keyes in her article "The Value of the Special Library: Review and Analysis" notes that it is 2.3 times more expensive for an organization to garner information from other sources than to provide an on-site library. Thus for every dollar invested by an organization in their on-site library, the return is \$2.30.

Finding a library's dollar value:

Start by sending a short survey to library users, asking them to:

1. Estimate the percent of time the library meets their needs.
2. Estimate the number of hours they save per month by having an onsite library.
3. Provide narrative comments on library impact and worth.

Next, assemble library statistics regarding collection, circulation, routing, and reference service.

The survey and statistics together will provide the following:

1. The percent of time the library meets organization and patron needs.
2. Narrative comments on qualitative value.
3. Dollar figures on time saved for other employees, the worth of reference service and the worth of the library collection.

Finally, armed with the above information and the yearly library operating cost, a ROI figure is determined.

Specifically:

1. **Percent of time the library meets the organization's needs:** Add up the percent estimates from the first survey question and divide by the number of respondents. It is important to note that the survey respondents are not only pleased with what the library provides, they said that for this percent of the time, the information provided is what they, and thus the organization, needed.
2. **Dollar value of time saved for other employees:** From the second survey question, add up the number of hours per month the employees estimate they save by having an on-site library. Multiply this by 12 to find the number of hours per year. Now multiply the hours per year by an average wage (your human resources department can estimate this) for those responding, to find the cost per year. If your survey respondents are a distinct subgroup of your library patrons, you may want to adjust this number for your entire patron population.
3. **Narrative comments of value:** The survey also provides narrative comments of library value, both positive and offering helpful suggestions. These suggestions should remain in narrative form, complement the bottom line numbers and focus on the quality provided. Also note that employees consider the library important enough to take time to offer constructive comments.
4. **Value of reference work:** From library statistics, establish how many reference questions you respond to annually. To be very fair when assigning value to this activity, I simply eliminated half of these as short answer questions, leaving half of the reference total.

What dollar value can be assigned to reference work? Most independent information professionals charge between \$60 and \$200 per hour. As an example, the James J. Hill Reference Library, a professional, fee-based, business research library in St. Paul, Minn., charges \$120 per hour.

The information specialist I talked to at Hill Library said the \$120 per hour is inclusive, reflecting librarian expertise and specialization, access to specialized databases, the library's unique collection of resources and all other miscellaneous considerations such as postage, paper, etc. Estimating an average of one hour per question, multiply the number of reference questions by a professional amount, such as \$120 per hour.

5. **Value of the collection:** Utilize your statistics! In one year my library had the following statistics, which reflect direct use of the collection:

Journals/newsletters routed: 3,545
 Books circulated: 1,590
 Journals circulated: 686
 ILL to:248
 ILL from:499
 Total transactions: 6,568

What would be the cost if each department (a) purchased its own subscriptions (b) purchased each book used, or (c) arranged and paid for their own ILL? To illustrate not having an on-site library, multiply the total number of transactions by the average cost of an ILL article (for instance, \$8).

Finding the Return on Investment (ROI):

The ROI number is probably the single figure of most interest to an organization's executives. ROI, a cost-benefit ratio, can be found simply by adding the dollar value of the benefits: total together the time saved for other employees, value of reference and value of the collection. Divide the total benefit's dollar figure by the total annual library budget. This will provide you with a ratio or percent, which is the ROI figure.

Summary of My Library's Dollar Value:

- Percentage of time the library met the needs of the organization and its patrons: 92.2%.
- Narrative comments on library impact collected.
- Time saved for other employees each year: \$106,560
- Annual worth of reference service: \$78,300
- Library collection worth: \$52,544
- ROI: 4.3.

This is not a scientifically rigid study. However, this dollar value exercise presents a reasonable estimate of the value that my library provides to its organization.

End Notes

1. Wood, M. Sandra (editor). *Cost Analysis, Cost Recovery, Marketing, and Fee-Based Services: A Guide for the Health Sciences Librarian*. New York, NY: Haworth Press; 1985.
2. St. Clair, Guy. "Marketing the Library? or Marketing the Products?" *One-Person Library*. 1995 May; 12(1):1-4.
3. Weingand, Darlene E. "Preparing for the Millennium: The Case for Using Marketing Strategies." *Library Trends*. 1995 Winter; 43(3):295+.
4. Smith, Duncan. "Practice as a Marketing Tool: Four Case Studies." *Library Trends*. 1995 Winter; 43(3): 450+.
5. St. Clair, Guy. "Thinking About Marketing, Yet Once Again." *One-Person Library*. 1992 Apr; 8(12):1-3.

Bibliography

Berensman, D'Arlene. "Marketing a Science Library." *One-Person Library*: 1999 Jul; 19(3):S8-S9. Berensman summarizes a marketing program presented at a conference.

Bushing, Mary C. "The Library's Product and Excellence." *Library Trends*. 1995 Winter: 43(3):384+. There are several reasons for the failure of libraries to adopt marketing practices. A societal-marketing focus is one way to meet user needs while satisfying professional standards of library excellence.

"Demonstrating the Value of Libraries." *Liaison*. 1996. Note: <http://www.nlc-bcn.ca/cfl-cbgf/liaison/1996/96-5/value.htm>

"Determining Library Value: The Boston Method." *One-Person Library*. 1995 Mar; 11(11):1-4.

At a meeting of special librarians, managers and librarians described how they establish the value of the library to the organization.

Dimick, Barbara. "Marketing Youth Services." *Library Trends*. 1995 Winter; 43(3):463+.

A marketing orientation on using marketing segmentation is used to help develop effective programs.

Doyle, Christine. "New Equipment, New Building, New Image: A Marketing Success Story." *Computers in Libraries*. 1998 Sep; 18(8):34+.

The Rochester (NY) Public Library uses a public relations campaign to help achieve support.

Keyes, Alison M. "The Value of the Special Library: Review and Analysis." *Special Libraries*. 1995 Summer; 172-187.

Keyes examines and reviews the literature, and evaluates techniques for determining the monetary value of special libraries.

MacMorris, Lee. "Advice to All OPSs: Market, Market, Market." *One-Person Library*. 1997 Feb; 13(10): 7-8.

How one-person libraries should think about the work they do.

Morgan, Eric Lease. "Marketing Future Libraries." *Computers in Libraries*. 1998 Sep; 50-51.

Morgan stresses that we must do more to improve our services and to convince people to use those services.

Saunders, Laverna. "From the Editor Marketing Library Services." *Computers in Libraries*. 1999 Sep; 19(8): 55.

Libraries can improve their usage statistics by marketing themselves. One way is to use an Internet URL.

"Self-Assessment for One-Person Librarians (II): Using the SLA Professional Competencies." *One-Person Library*. 1997 Dec; 14(8):4-5.

"Needs Assessment and Marketing" is listed as SLA professional competencies for one-person libraries.

Siess, Judith. "Thinking about Library Promotion: Self-Serving or Just Good Sense?" *One-Person Library*. 1999 Feb; 15(10):1-3.

Marketing is essential and every contact with someone outside the library is a marketing opportunity.

Siess, Judith A. "Marketing 102: Some Immutable Laws." *One-Person Library*. 1998 Sep; 15(5):6-7.

Siess considers the book "The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing: Violate Them at Your Own Risk" (by Ries and Trout, NY, Harper Business, 1994), and comments on several of the "laws" as they relate to libraries and librarians.

Smith, Duncan. "Practice as a Marketing Tool: Four Case Studies." *Library Trends*. 1995 Winter; 43(3): 450+.

Four case studies provide examples of how librarians have adopted marketing stances to change relationships with users. The studies demonstrate that there is no barrier between marketing and librarianship.

St. Clair, Guy. "Marketing the Library? or Marketing the Products?" *One-Person Library*. 1995 May; 12(1):1-4.

St. Clair notes that difficulties marketing the library might stem from preconceived definitions of the term librarian.

St. Clair, Guy. "Thinking About Marketing, Yet Once Again." *One-Person Library*. 1992 Apr; 8(12):1-3.

St. Clair discusses marketing within the context of our knowledge of our organization.

Thesing, Jane I. "Marketing Academic Library Bibliographic Instruction Programs: Case and Commentary." *Research Strategies*. 1985; 3(1):29-36.

This case study chronicles the rise and fall of a typical academic library program of bibliographic instruction. The accompanying commentary examines the case from a marketing point of view and suggests procedures that academic libraries could implement to develop programs and services, which would result in a higher degree of user satisfaction.

Weiner, Barbara W. "A Bottom Line Adventure." *Behavioral and Social Sciences Librarian*. 2000; 18(2):27-31.

Weiner provides a personal account of the steps used in assigning a dollar value to the services and resources in a specialized healthcare/addictions library. A cost-benefit ratio is determined.

Weingand, Darlene E. "Preparing for the Millennium: The Case for Using Marketing Strategies." *Library Trends*. 1995 Winter; 43(3):295+.

Use of marketing principles help libraries survive the challenges of increasing technology and declining budgets. The interrelationship between marketing and planning and the phases in the marketing process are discussed.

White, Marilyn Domas and Abels, Eileen G. "Measuring Service Quality in Special Libraries: Lessons from Service Marketing." *Special Libraries*. 1995 Winter; 36-45.

Reviews the service marketing literature for models and data-gathering instruments measuring service quality, emphasizing SERVQUAL and SERVPERF.

Wood, M. Sandra (editor). *Cost Analysis, Cost Recovery, Marketing, and Fee-Based Services: A Guide for the Health Sciences Librarian*. New York, NY: Haworth Press; 1985.

Marketing Strategies for Immediate Use

acquisitions	advertising	annual report	book sales	bookmarks
brown bag seminars	bulletin boards	committees	company newsletters	direct mail
displays	dollar value of services	email attachments	evaluation	exhibits
handouts	humor	incentives	information packets	interviews
library newsletter	marketing audit	media spots	mobility (walk around)	needs assessment
network of supporters	never lunch alone	newspaper column	open house	positive image
quarterly reports	quotes	refreshments	routing slips	SDI
specialize	stamp/label	stationery	statistics	technology
testimonials	thank you's	word of mouth	work smart	