

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Real-Life Marketing and Promotion Strategies in College Libraries: Connecting Campus with Community. Edited by B.W. Petruzzelli. Binghamton, N.Y.: Haworth Press, 2005. 192 pages (soft cover). ISBN: 978-0-7890-3158-7. CAN\$27.50.

Marketing is the wide range of activities involved in making sure that you're continuing to meet the needs of your customers and getting value in return. These activities include market research to find out, for example, what groups of potential customers exist, what their needs are, which of those needs you can meet, how you should meet them, etc. Marketing also includes analyzing the competition, positioning your new product or service (finding your market niche), pricing your products and services, and promoting them through continued advertising, promotions, public relations and sales.¹

The aim of *Real-Life Marketing and Promotion Strategies in College Libraries* is to inform and encourage academic library staff to carry out marketing activities. Marketing, as defined above, is more than promotional campaigns or public relations. The editor of this collection, who has more than 10 years of marketing experience at a senior administrative level, has compiled a collection of cases that illustrates this range of marketing activities and makes them relevant to library practice. Published simultaneously as *College and Undergraduate Libraries* (Vol. 12, No. 1/2, 2005), this volume provides real-life examples and practical tips. Although its layout could be better organized and the index leaves much to be desired, the papers are interesting, readable, and even inspirational.

In the preface, Pat Wagner observes that in the past decade there has been a marked increase of interest in marketing by academic libraries. Many of the papers in *Real-Life Marketing and Promotion Strategies in College Libraries* attribute this to the necessity of demonstrating the value and relevance of the library in the face of competition from other information sources and from academic departments vying for decreasing institutional dollars. In fact, the impetus for several marketing initiatives presented in this book is not only the promotion of new services and resources, but also declining circulation and other usage statistics, and lack of visibility for the library and staff. Ironically, as information becomes more pervasive, the library itself is becoming increasingly invisible; users do not always recognize the connection between the availability of resources and services, and the effort, work, and budgets of their libraries.

In "Implementing an action plan", Campbell and Gibson note that, traditionally, academic librarians have been reluctant to do active marketing, believing they have a captive audience. Campbell and Gibson counter that, in light of the competitive rationale and the changing demographic composition and emerging learning styles of the student body, aca-

ademic librarians must overcome this unwillingness. According to Wagner, "by not experimenting with marketing and taking risks, the choice is stagnation and a decline into oblivion" (p. 280).

Wagner states that "marketing is a conversation where the library user does 75% of the conversation." Awareness of users and ongoing feedback to discover what they need and want are crucial to creating meaningful library service. Similarly, Becher and Flug underscore the importance of dialogue with users in their chapter "Using student focus groups to inform library planning and marketing". They discuss the value of focus groups and strategies of compiling and extrapolating data from this method of research. The authors report that live assessments carried out in conjunction with other assessment efforts, such as LibQUAL+ and their library's campus climate survey, created an environment where students and faculty became partners in voicing support for increased resources for the library.

In "Matching media to audience equals marketing success", Conley and Tucker describe how audience and media segmentation make for an effective communication strategy and provide a sample matrix that they use to determine the best vehicle for announcements. In the same paper, the authors state, "Successful marketing allows the organization to allocate resources and design programs according to user needs and requires a plan guided by the library's mission statement." Tying marketing activities into the panoramic strategic plan of the library supports (i) persistence in promotional activities, which is essential to their success; (ii) consistency in messages, which influences attitudes; and (iii) ability to respond quickly to user complaints and suggestions, which ensures the development of appropriate services.

Marketing, of course, requires organization, energy, creativity, collaboration, time, the right opportunities, and money. However, marketing initiatives do not necessarily need to be on a large and lavish scale and can be executed using existing promotional resources. Empey and Black in "Marketing the academic library: building on the '@ your library' framework" and MacAlpine in "Frankenstein @ our library – monstrous opportunities for marketing" describe how they used national library advocacy materials and infrastructures to launch campaigns at their libraries. In "Affordable, effective, and realistic marketing" by J.M. Verostek and "Drop them a postcard" by J.A. Cosgrove, there are useful tips on how to put on successful promotional campaigns. In addition, the success of marketing can be enhanced through partnership with other people or institutions. In "Collaborating with students to develop an advertising campaign", McGeachin and Ramirez relate how they teamed up with undergraduate members of the American Advertising Federa-

¹Carter McNamara. Basic definitions: Advertising, marketing, promotion, public relations and publicity, and sales. 1999 [accessed 2007 Nov 29]. Available from http://www.managementhelp.org/ad_prmot/defntion.htm.

tion to develop a promotional campaign for their netLibrary collection.

Although mainly reflecting college and small university libraries, these examples are relevant to teaching institutions of any size. In an especially useful chapter titled "Marketing resources for the busy librarian", Deborah O. Lee gives a good overview of the literature and an annotated bibliography to assist librarians, in any setting, with developing marketing plans and promoting services.

The clarion call has sounded: In *MLA News* (January 2007), Patricia C. Higginbottom urged "everyone in the li-

brary [to] ... be a leader in promoting the services and resources of the library to its users." After all, she warned, "without users you will not have a library." Perhaps with this book we can begin to respond to the call.

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