

Social marketing: an impact strategy for school libraries in times of change

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Abstract

*Social marketing as a concept was developed in the 1970s to help improve overall society and to bring about positive social changes. The concept of social marketing was first presented by Zaltman, Kotler, and Kaufman, in their 1972 book, *Creating Social Change*. This paper addresses the role of social marketing with specific examples of how social marketing associated with educational research can be applied to school libraries. Social marketing is based on general marketing principles and strategies aimed at selling products and services to consumers but with the purpose of improving society by providing socially relevant information; changing existing actions; and improving individual or group behaviors, attitudes or beliefs; and reinforcing desired behaviors. Since the 1970s, social marketing has been used widely in the United States to promote a variety of pro-social behaviors including: reducing smoking, reducing drug abuse, preventing heart disease, promoting contraceptive use, and promoting organ donation. In recent years the U.S. government has used social marketing to encourage enrollment in the controversial Affordable Health Care program. These marketing approaches are theoretically encased in well-conceived educational and public information programs and management. This paper will provide examples of social marketing research methods and results as used by the presenter in school and public libraries youth services. The paper will likewise highlight resources helpful to school librarians in designing and implementing social marketing strategies.*

Keywords: Social marketing

Social Marketing: An Impact Strategy for School Libraries In Times of Change

Librarianship in general by the 1930s had accepted and promoted libraries of all types as important institutions serving broad-based social, cultural, educational, intellectual and scholarly needs in many societies. The 1930s was a decade of economic instability and social dislocations similar in many ways as to what we face today. Important research, theories and strategies targeting library sustainability grew from this general unrest. The

important research from the faculty of the Chicago University's Graduate Library School during the 1930 decade and beyond helped solidify the social expectations of libraries and provided means to solve problems. This research centered on the importance of reading in society; how to understand and solve pressing problems encountered by libraries, how to understand and engage political and social leaders; and how to expand the users of libraries (Waples, 1931, 1939; Wilson, 1938).

Social Marketing and Social Change

By the 1970s newer approaches were added to what had gone before. Social marketing as a concept developed in the 1970s to help improve society and to change in positive ways the concepts that people hold about important issues. The concept of social marketing was first presented by Zaltman, Kotler, and Kaufman, in their 1972 book, *Creating Social Change*. Since then others such as Kotler and Lee (2008) have expanded on these basic ideas. In this discussion I will present ideas of how social marketing has and can serve school libraries.

Social marketing is based on general marketing principles and strategies aimed at selling products and services to consumers; but with the purpose of improving society by providing socially relevant information, changing existing actions; altering individual or group behaviors, attitudes or beliefs; and reinforcing desired behaviors.

Since the 1970s, social marketing has been used widely to promote a variety of pro-social behaviors including: reducing smoking, reducing drug abuse, preventing heart disease, promoting contraceptive use, and promoting organ donation.

A current campaign by the United States Health Department is aimed at informing women about the need for periodic health examinations especially concerning cancer. Such marketing approaches are theoretically encased in well-conceived educational and public information programs and management.

Positive behavior and attitude change is essential in social marketing. Social marketing is based on these responses patterns: AIDA.

- Attention
- Interest
- Desire
- Action

Attention asserts that a social marketing message must be noticed and attract attention. Only a brief look at commercial television provides examples how this is done in for-profit marketing. Fast-cars, beautiful country-sides, and even a talking duck and an English-accented gecko come to mind. For any social marketing message to be effective, it must provoke *interest*. Interests are generally based on psychological as well social needs that are important to the individual and group. In social marketing the message must generate interest in an organization and its services and/or products.

For example, an effective social message directed at a target audience of women who are concerned about their children's reading readiness prior to formal schooling must be carefully tailored to raise their interests in reading programs available at the public library. The

challenge here is to design a message that prompts attention and interests by centering on the positive social and psychological needs that most parents have about parenting.

Closely following this is the need that the message created a *desire* to acquire the particular service or product. The message must show that the service and/or product being marketed will be of genuine immediate and/or long-term benefit to the individual and groups. This aspect of the message must be strong enough to promote desire to take action that will lead to a reward of some nature. What follows design is *Action*. Action is the driving modification that propels individuals and groups to seek the services and/or products that are being promoted.

Social marketing is not indoctrination. Its primary mission is to provide information and education with guidelines and alternatives that help individuals and groups assume and form pro-social, attitudes and behaviors.

Current authorities writing on social marketing now stress the differences between social marketing and non-profit marketing, and cause marketing. Non-profit marketing campaigns are conducted by organizations or individuals that operate in the public interest. They foster causes and do not seek financial profits (Non Profit Marketing, n.d.). Charitable groups and universities in the United States are perhaps among the most visible examples in the American library and the information community. Cause marketing is the coordinate of efforts between non-profit groups and for-profit groups (Cause Marketing (n.d.)). We see this when industry, whether local and national, cooperates with local entities such as libraries or school to support the cause of reading and education. National food chains often coordinate through local store outlets to encourage charitable giving for selected causes ([Three] Cause Marketing Trend n.d.).

Authorities are careful to clarify issues appropriate to social marketing and ethical considerations inherent in such research. They also outline how marketing research can well-serve social marketing campaigns (Kotler and Lee, 2008). These research suggestions are appropriate for library and information science education and will be discussed later.

Identifying a target audience is essential in social marketing. Archivist Dennis Meissner argues that information agencies such as archives may have focused too broadly on promoting their services as elements of social institutions with cultural identities rather than directing their services to well selected-target audiences as advocated in social marketing (Meissner, 2008).

Social Marketing for School Libraries and Information Centers

Although librarians, including school libraries have not always identified their work in the context of social marketing, nevertheless, examples abound. Public and school librarians historically have used social marketing. For examples, early public library programs, along with developing school libraries, focused on encourage children to read; and citizenship education. In more recent times public libraries have offered English classes to non-native speakers; and child-care education programs for parents who live in poverty or social isolation. School librarians have liked promoted parental environment in existing social programs in neighborhood and communities.

Social marketing strategies used in school library environments are available on numerous websites located in the United States. These websites and pages offer information to teachers, parents, and of course students. Some examples include

For teachers--teaching units:

Life Skills:

StopBullying.gov

Stop Bullying kids' site

NetSmartz. Internet safety

How to Be a Good Sport

Out on a Limb: A Guide to Getting Along

Planet Tolerance. Activities from the Southern Poverty Law Center

Bullies. From PBS Kids

Volunteer: Give and Get Back From PBS Kids

Source: University Elementary School, Bloomington Indiana,

(<https://sites.google.com/site/ueslibrary/home/for-teachers>, n.d.)

Community: Announcement of Community Education Opportunities:

“Providing Lifelong Learning For All Ages: Early Childhood | Preschool | Youth | Adults | Seniors” [series of community-focused educational courses open to the community].

Source: Sartell-St. Stephen Schools, Sartell, Minnesota. Providing Lifelong Learning for All Ages (<http://www.sartell.k12.mn.us/pine-meadow-elementary/media-center>, 2015).

For Students:

Cyber Smart—Digital Citizenship; Grade 10. [On line tutorial about using and staying safe on the Internet, available through the library's website.

Source: Abington Senior High School Library, Abington, Pennsylvania.

(<http://ahsresearch.wikispaces.com/Cyber+Smart>).

For Parents:

Parents Space. Offers access to sites and information on reading, Internet Safety, and number online library resources.

Source: Herricks Virtual Library Media Center, New Hyde Park, New York.

(<https://sites.google.com/site/herricksvlmc/home>, n.d.).

School libraries have at their core a target audience. These include parents, faculty, staff, and students. The most popular form of social marketing in schools is providing instruction in information skills and critical thinking. These instructions most often directed at a target audience identified by specific age and class groupings. These instructions are carefully coordinated with the overall curriculum structure of the school as well as the needs of a particular class and teacher.

A Research-Based Case Study in Social Marketing

In 2007 my colleague Barbara Immroth and I, conducted a study on school librarians and social marketing (Lukenbill and Immroth). The major objective of this study was to understand the social and professional dynamics that occur when social marketing principles are used to encourage and promote collaboration between school librarians and classroom teachers.

Collaboration has been promoted throughout the history of school librarianship in the United States, but within recent decades it has taken on new importance in concert with the developing role of the school librarians as an effective part of classroom teaching. (Immroth and Lukenbill, 2007; Boyle, 2008). The basic design of our study used graduate students who were enrolled in a practicum course required for state certification as school librarians. These students were already certified teachers and they were at the end of their studies for the master's degree.

The design also included focus groups of teachers selected from elementary, junior high (middle school), and high school. Members of the focus groups were asked a series of questions regarding collaboration with school librarians. The focus groups were not selected from schools where the school practicum students were assigned. Invitations to join the focus groups were made by school selected school librarians to teachers in the respective schools.

The practicum students were given instructions concerning the major aspects of social marketing and asked to participate in a social marketing campaign at the school. They were instructed to follow the major principles of social marketing (Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action) and to select from applications one teacher in their school to become involved with them in a collaborative teaching project.

Because gaining attention was the first step in social marketing, students were instructed to design attractive leaflets for distribution to their faculty, explain the project and asking for volunteers. Teacher-participants were allotted \$100 each to purchase materials in their subject area for the library.

The collaborative units were not only to involve classroom subject areas, but to integrate information skill into the instructions. As a part of this collaboration, the student-librarians were provided instructions on how to unobtrusively observe, and take notes for a field journal. Final evaluation was based each project involved assessments from both the teacher and the student-librarian. A case study format was developed for each project, followed by qualitative synthesizing of information from all cases to determine major social and professional dynamics that occurred.

Major Findings: The AIDA Model

Traditional means of gaining *Attention* such as leaflets, brochures distributed to faculty were not effective. The two most effective means were email messages and personal contacts initiated by the building librarian. The \$100 incentive apparently had little effect on promoting collaboration. We concluded from these data that the communication environment in which the collaboration occurs must be taken into account and that in school situations personal contacts might serve the *Attention* aspects of social marketing much better.

Teachers showed little *Interest* in the project. They cited time constraints, such as state-mandated test preparations. The data also suggested that interest does not come automatically, and that interest in collaboration is social process that requires gradual development. Our data strongly implies that the librarian must take initially responsibility for this.

The *Desire* and *Action* results this model was negative as reflected in the above data. For example, only one teacher responded directly to the advertisements. Although all student-librarians did find teachers willing to collaborate, these mostly came after the school librarian intervened and asked teachers whom they trusted to work with the student-librarians.

In terms of collaboration, this study reflected findings in a landmark study by Mettessich and Monsey (1992). The most effective predictors of collaboration included “shared interests, mutual trust, flexibility, adaptability and clear roles and policies” (Mettessich, and Monsey. 1992). In this particular case, predictors indicated that teacher and librarian shared goals, purposes, that leadership of the school librarian was important, and that confidence in the collaborating librarian (e.g., the student-librarian was essential. Underlying results of the collaboration from the teachers indicated appreciation for learning about new information resources and feelings of professional contributions.

The focus groups, although highly selective reinforced much of these ideas. The focus groups as a whole were supportive of collaboration. They noted that although they would initiate a collaboration project with a librarian, they would appreciate the school librarian communicating in various ways how they are willing to collaborate with teachers, setting collaboration boundaries (e.g., time, scheduling, and responsibilities for instruction designs and presentations).

Learning from these Case Studies

School Library Collaboration and Social Marketing show that when social marketing concepts are introduced into a school environment they must conform to traditional forms of communication within the individual school environment. Social marketing ideas must have clear and appeal to faculty in terms of their teaching responsibilities and time. A social marketing are most likely to succeed in schools where there is a trust between teachers and their librarian; and a clear understanding by both teachers and librarians of the boundaries that affect collaboration.

How to Prepare for a Social Marketing Campaign

When social marketing is used in school librarianship, we need not reinvent the wheel. Other professions such as public health offer us a great deal of guidance for adaption. These following suggestions are based on course design “CDCynergy: Social Marketing Edition” developed and promoted by the United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (CDCynergy: Social Marketing Edition).

The elements in the CDC design are based on traditional learning and instruction theories and approaches. Following are CDC’s guidelines:

- Learn basic social marketing concepts and vocabulary.
- Understand when and why one should use social marketing in school library settings. It is important to understand that one of the main principles of social marketing is to change attitudes and behaviors for the larger social good.
- Appreciate the difference between social marketing and commercial marketing. Commercial marketing is profit-driven while social marketing is designed to bring about social change for the betterment of society.

- Understand the meaning of audience within the context of social marketing. The term Audience Orientation is directed at knowing and understanding the large audience. The Target Audience is a selected part of the larger audience whose behaviors and attitudes might be improved through social marketing interventions. For example, we know the demographic makeup of our committee and we know that parts of this demographical population are not users of children's services available to them within their home environments. How can we best target this market to change in positive ways their attitude and behavior of care-givers toward children services?
- Understand and not shy away from the major concept that social marketing is designed to influencing and change behaviors. In doing this, teacher-librarians take on some of the roles of social activists. Perhaps we know that low-income mothers do not participate in children's story hours offered by the school and/or public library. What intervention techniques might move these mothers as a cohort to increase their participation by attending and bring their children with them to story hour at least two times a month? A review the AISA model discussed previously will help us better understand the integrating effects of intervention in bring about changes in behaviors.
- Appreciate the concept of "exchange" in social marketing. Exchange is widely used in commerce as well as social life. It simply means that we weight the cost of buying a product or considering the cost of participating in an activity. What will the cost be as well as the benefits for mothers bringing their children two time a month to story hour at the public or school library (cost of time away from work or home, transportation compared to the overall, but often intangible benefits that story hour has for their children).
- Recognize exchange values. These values include the product that one offers to the target market (free story hour); the price that the audience must pay (attending the story house), the place (it is convenience in terms of transportation, safety); and promotion-- how will the information about the story hour and its benefits be distributed (message content and descriptions, materials, channels, and staff activities).

Another important aspect of social marketing is the planning processes that are involved.

Plan carefully:

- Based on data at hand, recognize existing problems and issue;
- Identify the target market and its segments;
- Decide specific change strategies to use in promoting positive behaviors and attitudes through intervention;
- Design the product to be promoted that ensures acceptance;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and it delivery.

Learn more about audience analysis, or "mapping." Consider audience mapping (community analysis) and its implementations.

Venues for Management Instruction

Social marketing instruction for teacher-librarians is applicable to a variety of instructional models. These include:

- Short introductory units in management, library-type, and entrepreneurial courses and workshops offered in workshop environments;

- Fully developed courses and/or seminars based on theoretical concepts of marketing in schools and colleges of library and information studies;
- Independent study and/or research;
- Online instruction using existing programs such from CDC. A word of caution: Staff members and students may have difficulty learning from a discipline of which they are not familiar. Instructors within these venues may wish to help students adapt information from these programs to their professional interests by providing guides and/or questions. For example, the CDC program asks students to identify problems and issues in health care delivery. This can easily be adapted by teacher-librarians to identifying problems and issues in their own professional areas.
- In formal education settings, practicums and internships allow for “hand-one” experiences with social marketing. Schools often require field-work experiences prior to graduation and a social marketing experience can be beneficial to both students and agencies that that work with him. Staffs can often develop their own “coaching” approaches in cooperation with other staff members.

Recommendations for Research.

Based on our research as well as other studies, research ideas and projects seem abundant. Often research projects relate directly to instruction and the improvement of educational models. These include:

- *Process Skills.* The processes involved in planning a social marketing strategy are paramount to successful campaigns. Just what skills are needed to successfully undertake social marketing? What process skills are needed within the environmental constructs as well as individuals who work within those constructs? What methodologies available to research can help determine those process skills? How appropriate will field work, focus groups, surveys, and case studies be? The case studies above highlight the need to know the history of the target audience, possible limitations and strategies necessary to overcome these impediments.
- *Analyzing the Social Market and Procedures for Target Market Selection.* Clear understanding of the environment of the audience and target audience for social marketing is fundamental. This is much akin to community analysis that libraries and information agencies have had experience. Kolter and Lee (2008) suggest that mapping both the internal and external environment is a useful technique. Mapping techniques are extensive. Mapping involves research, setting objective and actions, and determining devices for the market campaign (Social Media Marketing, n.d.).

Mapping also aids in deterring the target audience in that mapping gathers intelligence on the audience and their behaviors. Mapping also helps to narrow the target audience into segments and in profiling those segments more precisely.

Mapping research is likewise important because new technologies have open up a variety of means to reach a target audience. As we saw with Case 3, (the school social marketing situation), email was a useful contact method as was relying on personal contacts. Will other methods such as blogs, microblogging, social networking, multimedia sharing, and social bookmarking work? Research is needed to understand what situations in which these will work and/or not work? Budgeting is also a part of mapping. Research is needed to determine cost and available resources for mapping.

Can existing staffs be trained to conduct the mapping or will outside, fee-based consultants be needed (Social Media Marketing, n.d.)?

- *Crafting Promotion Strategies.* Library and information agencies will benefit from a variety of issues involving social marketing: In addition to those already discussed, these include research such as:
 - Setting objectives and goals. What background data do we have to guide information agencies in setting objectives and goals for a social marketing campaign? Are there historical records and experiments that will help us in this task?
 - Procedures for selecting target audiences
 - Staff training understanding in the principles and techniques of social marketing, including procedures for helping staff deepen their understanding of the target market
 - Creating platforms for social marketing. Among other elements this can include what products and services will be served best served by social marketing? What incentives are necessary; what are the disincentives found within the target market that both promote and discourage acquiring the services or product? This often referred to a pricing cost. (Social Media Marketing, n.d.). For example, Case 3 indicated that momentary reward in this environment had little influence on acceptance.
 - Message design and computer architecture. Social marketing requires a message designed to attract and sell the product or service. Research that helps us understands how the design of the message and its delivery are needed. This is particularly important because of the variety of target markets that exist in library and information agency environments. For example, designs that work well for public libraries may not do well in a school library. Numerous public libraries have posted social marketing-type messages that are available for research.
 - Communication delivery of the message. As mentioned earlier, research is required to help information agencies determine the most effect means of communicating the message. Will traditional public relations campaigns continue to work with a changing information technology environment?
 - Managing a social market campaign. Like any endeavor, social marketing must be managed based on sound research and management models. Will historical research help us identify successful management models from past experiments? Are existing monitoring and evaluation models useful in social marketing campaigns? If not, can research help us determine new models that apply to the information agencies?
 - What types of bibliographic research are needed? What resources are available to help in social marketing—print, online, paid consultants? What research will help determine the advantages or disadvantages for using for-fee consultants? Are online instructional units available that will fit the needs of non-profit agencies such as library and other information agencies? If not, what types of research are needed to determine the need for such instructional approaches?
 - Others theories to be explored concerning social marketing research. For example social exchange theory is very much relates to how both people and institutions share ideas, materials, knowledge and cooperate in ways to enhance their own productivity. Diffusion and innovation theories need further testing in terms of social marketing. As indicated previously, research in message construction and display of message in

various formats will prove useful. This in turn leads to testing learning and instructional theories as to how people and process instructional information within social marketing contexts (Lukenbill, 2012. pp. 108-138, 339-344; Neuman, 2006).

Conclusion

Our challenge today is to better refine our practices and research methods and approaches to meet modern demands within school library environments. As defined in this discussion, social marketing in support of school library services and products is one avenue worth better exploration both in practice and in research.

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