

On a Mission to Market

Law librarians can find marketing and publicity help with books, periodicals, and the Web

by Mark D. Engsborg



As librarians, most of us have probably heard the call to market our libraries, our services, even ourselves. We are called upon to publicize new and not-so-new services and get our work—and ourselves—out in front of our patrons. This refrain has increased in volume during the past several years, keeping pace with the development of Web-based products.

So just where is the information to help us do this? After all, most of us have little formal training in marketing and publicity, let alone experience in these areas we are told are so vital. I have examined books, periodicals, and sites on the Internet and World Wide Web that focus on the subject of library marketing. What I have compiled is not a bibliography of library marketing literature per se, but a brief overview of the diversity and quantity of material on the subject of library marketing.

Books

Entire books on library marketing are few and far between, though there are a handful of newer titles in this area. Three of the newer books of this genre include: *Library Marketing That Works!* by Suzanne Walters (Neal-Schuman, 2004); *Strategic Marketing in Library and Information Science*, by Irene Owens (Haworth Information Press, 2003); and *The Visible Librarian: Asserting Your Value With Marketing and Advocacy*, by Judith A. Siess (ALA, 2003).

Library Marketing That Works! is a how-to guide for librarians, providing step-by-step instructions for every phase of a comprehensive library marketing program.

Strategic Marketing in Library and Information Science addresses a gap in the library and information studies canon, incorporating theory and contemporary research studies into its analysis. According to the publisher, “The book explains how and why managers should combine marketing strategy with strategic planning and demonstrates the means by which LIS could move toward a more full-fledged use of marketing—relationship marketing and social marketing in particular.”

The Visible Librarian: Asserting Your Value With Marketing and Advocacy is similar to Walters’ book in its emphasis on practical application of marketing techniques in library contexts. Author Judith A. Siess outlines strategies to improve customer service, develop advocates, maintain marketing resources, and gain recognition for providing value.

If nothing else, these three titles reveal that there are book authors out there working to provide us with better tools to bring our marketing skills up to par. But despite the efforts of these three authors and a handful of others, there remain few book-length treatments on the subject of library marketing.

Periodicals

A little research reveals some surprising things about the kind of library marketing information available in periodicals. I performed searches in each of the indexes to four publications I thought would be familiar to most law librarians: *AALL Spectrum*, *Information Outlook*, *Library Trends*, and *Law Library Journal*. I searched the indices for articles, excluding book reviews. I further restricted my search to the terms “market” and “publicity” in the title and subject fields and limited the results to the years 2000–2005. Highly unscientific to be sure, but the results were instructive nonetheless.

I found that with approximately 50 feature articles on marketing or publicity from 2000–2005, *Spectrum* far and away published the greatest number of articles—

and the most diverse material, too. Next was *Information Outlook* with 10 feature articles. *Library Trends* and *Law Library Journal*, however, had no feature articles devoted to marketing or publicity during the period in question.

Not finding any marketing articles in *Law Library Journal* and especially in *Library Trends* was something of a surprise. After all, what can be more of a trend in libraries than library marketing? In terms of the scope of material available in *Spectrum* and *Information Outlook*, one can find information on just about every aspect of library marketing and publicity. The following are a few examples of articles written mostly by librarians for librarians:

- **Introductory or Overview Materials**
Smith, Regina, "The ABCs of Public Relations," *AALL Spectrum*, 5/99:22
- **Marketing Budgets**
Siess, J., "Marketing Without Much Money," *Information Outlook* 10/04:28
- **Displays**
Bredemeyer, Carol, "Making a Case for Display Cases," *AALL Spectrum* 9/97:31
- **Slogans**
Merring, Lynn Connor, "Slogans to Market Libraries By," *AALL Spectrum* 6/99:40
- **Marketing for Solo Librarians**
Fisher, "D.M., Flying Solo? Involve Your Patrons in Your Work; Involve Your Library in Theirs," *Information Outlook* 9/04:23
- **Newsletters**
Curci-Gonzalez, Lucy, "My Excellent Adventure: Across the C's of Newsletter Design and Editing," *AALL Spectrum* 12/00:36
- **Targeted Marketing**
Jalowka, Claudia, "Marketing Early, Marketing to the Young," *AALL Spectrum* 6/01:38
- **Brochures**
Hyzy, Laura, "How to Create a Brochure," *AALL Spectrum* 11/97:22.

Web sites

In addition to print material, there are numerous Web sites devoted to various aspects of library marketing. Performing a Google search using the phrase "library marketing" yielded 52,700 hits. Of course, many of these will not be of much use, but the sheer number of them tells you that the issue is hot.

Among the thousands of sites are many that may be helpful for the novice—or not-so-novice—marketing librarian. Perhaps the most useful and dynamic sites belong to or refer to marketing in public libraries; however, the same techniques, tips, and other information found at these sites can be just as applicable in a law library setting as they are in public libraries. Here are two good sites.

www.olc.org/marketing. This well-designed site belongs to the Ohio Library Foundation and provides a useful and accessible introduction to marketing in library contexts. The home page describes the content of the site as, "Web-based training for public libraries. Six self-paced library marketing training modules. Links to marketing resources, examples, quizzes, and exercises." This is a great place for the novice to get practical assistance with such activities as creating a marketing plan, promotion methods, and much more.

www.librarysupportstaff.com/marketinglibs.html. Librarysupportstaff.com had its debut in October of 2000. It is a personal site owned and maintained by Mary Niederlander, a library technician who worked in a medical library prior to her retirement this January. It is a large and diverse site containing an astonishing breadth of information that may be of interest to librarians and library support staff.

The portion of the site concentrating on library marketing contains book

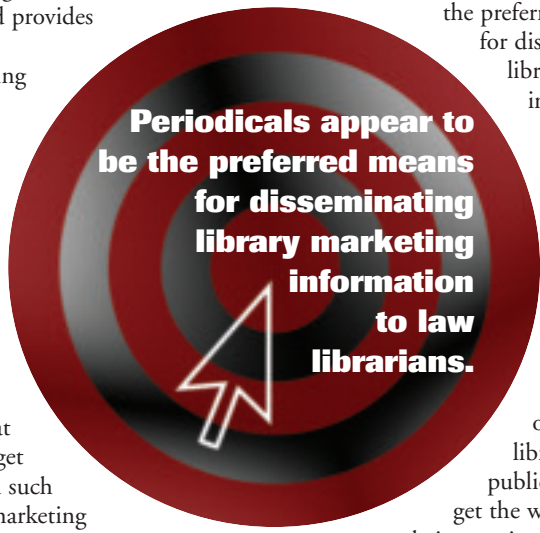
recommendations, links to full-text library marketing articles, links to other Web sites with helpful annotations, and much other useful information. The site is not a how-to guide for library marketing, but it contains a dynamic list of information and links for the librarian on a mission to market.

In Sum

The foregoing information on books, periodicals, and electronic sources of library marketing information reveals some interesting points worth noting. There are relatively few books that focus specifically on library marketing, particularly law library marketing. Several fairly recent publications demonstrate, however, that there is a market, ahem, for books on this subject.

An analysis of the data further reveals that periodicals appear to be the preferred means

for disseminating library marketing information to law librarians, specifically in *AALL Spectrum* and *Information Outlook*. Web sites appear to be the medium of choice for librarians in public libraries to get the word out to their constituencies about



library marketing.

There are exceptions, of course, to all of these observations. Law librarians can find thousands of print and electronic resources containing more general and business-oriented marketing information. The principles espoused in this wealth of resources are also applicable in library contexts. ■

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