

Marketing Inspiration

by Elizabeth LeDoux

How to move the law library to the center of your organization's culture

I consider myself a natural marketer. I see opportunities everywhere I look. However, Jill Stover, undergraduate services librarian at Virginia Commonwealth University and author of the blog, *Library Marketing—Thinking Outside the Book* (<http://librarymarketing.blogspot.com>), puts me to shame. Not only does Stover find inspiration in the most unlikely places, but she also finds it right at the source.

“For me, marketing involves two major Buddhist principles: *detachment* and *impermanence*,” she writes. I love a call to marketing founded in Buddhism, in both the simplicity and the obviousness of it.

In September 2006 Stover wrote about an article found on *AllAboutBranding.com*, which discusses organizations' brand identities. I don't know why it surprised me that Stover went directly to official marketing sources to find inspiration for marketing libraries. Not only was I unfamiliar with *AllAboutBranding.com*, but it also would not have occurred to me to look outside the literature, to Google, for information about branding. You never know where inspiration will come from.

Word of Mouth Marketing

Through Stover's blog I have been introduced to not just the concept of “word of mouth” marketing but also to the Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA), www.womma.org.

WOMMA defines word of mouth marketing thusly:

Word of mouth marketing isn't about creating word of mouth—it's learning how to make it work within a marketing objective.

There are 100 ways to market library services, but we can all agree that one attorney telling another attorney how helpful the library is has got to be worth five newsletters and two intranet pages, at least.

When Wal-Mart took it too far, creating fake word of mouth Web sites with fake customers giving fake praise to the store, WOMMA responded by creating a set of principles on an ethics page in its Web site.

How to Spread the Word

For inspiration, WOMMA offers:

- **Buzz Marketing:** Using high-profile entertainment or news to get people to talk about your brand.
- **Viral Marketing:** Creating entertaining or informative messages that are designed to be passed along in an exponential fashion, often electronically or by e-mail.
- **Community Marketing:** Forming or supporting niche communities that are likely to share interests about the brand (such as user groups, fan clubs, and discussion forums) and providing tools, content, and information to support those communities.
- **Grassroots Marketing:** Organizing and motivating volunteers to engage in personal or local outreach.
- **Evangelist Marketing:** Cultivating evangelists, advocates, or volunteers who are encouraged to take a leadership role in actively spreading the word on your behalf.
- **Product Seeding:** Placing the right product into the right hands at the right time, providing information or samples to influential individuals.
- **Influencer Marketing:** Identifying key communities and opinion leaders who are likely to talk about products and have the ability to influence the opinions of others.
- **Cause Marketing:** Supporting social causes to earn respect and support from people who feel strongly about the cause.

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- **Conversation Creation:** Developing interesting or fun advertising, e-mails, catch phrases, entertainment, or promotions designed to start word of mouth activity.
- **Brand Blogging:** Creating blogs and participating in the blogosphere, in the spirit of open, transparent communications; sharing information of value that the blog community may talk about.
- **Referral Programs:** Creating tools that enable satisfied customers to refer their friends.

From this core list, I can think of dozens of things I can do, some of them tomorrow, to create buzz for the library. For instance, I could run Westclips on my firm's name, forwarding attorney mentions to the attorneys and heads of practice groups. My firm's marketing department must be doing this, but why can't the library create some buzz too?

I could also create a funny and entertaining flash video about the library, the firm, and our favorite library users to show during National Library Week (though I shouldn't feel shy about creating buzz outside the protection of Library Week). And what are "communities" if not practice groups and "discussion forums" e-mail strings among practice groups?

Status Skills

WOMMA's Web site is a powerful example of a marketing tool, but there are dozens of others on Stover's blog. For example:

Trendwatching.com reports on an emerging trend that's right up librarians' collective alley: Status Skills. The report defines Status Skills this way: "In economies that increasingly depend on (and thus value) creative thinking and acting, well-known status symbols tied to owning and consuming goods and services will find worthy competition from 'STATUS SKILLS': those skills that consumers are mastering to make the most of those same goods and services, bringing them status by being good at something, and the story telling that comes with it." Skills are a product of information and training, and librarians fit squarely in the skills-providing business.

There is something very interesting to me about the idea of status. I believe it compels us along much faster than anything else. When we find and offer status, we link into the core needs of our patrons.

Last year I challenged my firm's new associates to become expert CCH searchers. Our firm had a tough time adapting to

CCH online and specifically to CCH's search capabilities. Instead of allowing the senior associates and partners to complain and, in the end, undermine the firm's use of the service, I challenged all the new associates to become experts in CCH, explaining that it would bring them status (or at least make them useful).

The strategy worked, and this year I have a line of attorneys waiting to talk to the CCH trainer and have had dozens of teachable moments with them all year long.

Future Trends

This leads nicely to a recent Stover post about the Virginia Library Association meeting this year, which had the most interesting keynote speaker. Thomas Frey, senior futurist and executive director of the DaVinci Institute (www.davinciinstitute.com), spoke about The Future of Libraries Beginning the Great Transformation (www.davinciinstitute.com/page.php?ID=120).

I was awestruck by Frey's predictions for the future of libraries. To skip to the end does not do him justice, but in the interest of space, let us start with his ninth trend: "We are transitioning from a product-based economy to an experience-based economy." He explains:

As the world's population ages and the Baby Boom generation approaches retirement, many of them will begin to shed their belongings to create a more free and mobile lifestyle. Each item that a person owns demands their attention, and the accumulation of physical goods to demonstrate a person's wealth is rapidly declining in importance. Experience becomes the key.

He goes on to ask us:

How would you rate your last library experience? Chances are that you've never been asked that question.

However, in the future, the patron experience will become key measurement criteria.

This idea that status comes from what you do and what you know, and no longer what you have, is very intriguing. It highlights an opportunity for librarians to create exciting, meaningful experiences for our users, which gives them status and power. This will create for librarians Frey's 10th and final trend: "Libraries will transition from a center of information to a center of culture."

I hope this inspires you to think of three things you can do in your library right now to confer status on to your users, moving us to the very center of our organizations' culture. Call it buzz. Who knew it would be

2007 A Day in the Life Photo Contest Starts Now

On your mark, get set, start shooting! A Day in the Life of the Law Library Community Photo Contest is going on this month. Don't miss out in the fun.

What: AALL members will take a wide range of photographs of law librarians working, meeting, teaching, and doing all that law librarians do in a given day. We encourage you to be creative in finding snapshots that capture the essence of law librarianship and are visually attractive.

When: Members will take photos this month—February 2007. Entry forms must be completed online or postmarked by February 28, 2007. We suggest that you capture images at all times of the day and all days of the week—be sure to note the time and date for each picture taken. Entries will be judged in April, and winners will be recognized on AALLNET, in the July 2007 issue of *AALL Spectrum* and during the AALL Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

Where: Take photos wherever you work, wherever law librarians are: at the circulation desk, working in technical services, drinking coffee at a staff meeting, assisting a patron in the stacks, shelving books, teaching legal research class, participating in local chapter events, or law librarians lobbying on our behalf.

Who: The contest is open to AALL members only.

How: Use whatever photographic equipment you have available—from digital cameras to 35mm. We welcome color and black and white images.

More Details: Visit www.aallnet.org/dayinlife for complete contest rules, photography tips, and the winning 2005 photos.

so simple in this new age? ■

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