

Marketing Here, Marketing There, Marketing EVERYWHERE

by Raquel M. Ortiz

The idea had humble beginnings. During the AALL Annual Meeting in Minneapolis last year, I took the bus to the Mall of America. "Take Out" brochures advertising changes in bus service were hanging from the handrails on the bus. The brochures took a different approach than the often unnoticed flyers at the bus stops or notices in a newspaper. Thus I got the idea to write about adapting marketing ideas from other industries.

In January and February, I sent a survey to about a half dozen law-related and nonlaw listservs asking about marketing ideas adapted from other industries, how they were adapted and any changes observed as a result of using the marketing ideas. Below are some of the suggestions derived from the survey, along with a few of my own.

Go to library users. Like the brochures on the bus suggest, an audience must be reached wherever they may be. This is not a new suggestion, but it is one that is often ignored. Flyers and display racks are great for those people who actually come into the library. If the graphics in the library's flyer are good, post a PDF version on its Web site; make sure to link to it from the library home page with a catchy headline. Keep the display rack "front and center." If that's not possible, find a way to get the library's audience to it. The Somerset County Library System in New Jersey used cutout footprints to direct users to its display rack; curiosity about where the footprints lead gets the best of children and adults, according to Manuela Minikus, public relations coordinator at the library.

Beyond using the library Web site to market the library and its programs, find out where users spend time and make the library's presence known. Don't expect users to take the initiative to find the library. Placemats in the cafeteria helped advertise the newest programs at Bennett D. Katz Library at the University of Maine at Augusta. A "welcome-wagon" type program targeted new faculty at the Texas Tech University Law Library. A similar program introduced new attorneys to Heller Ehrman White & McAuliffe LLP in Seattle.

Look at pop culture for inspiration. At last May's "Boot Camp for Teachers of Electronic Research" in Atlanta, participants mentioned that they adapted the TV shows "Survivor" and "Who Wants

to Be a Millionaire?" for their classes. They reported that their audiences were attracted to the programs by the catchy titles and were engaged by the teaching formats adapted from the shows. Christine Ryan, head of reference services at the Vermont Law School Library, produced a video called "The Legal Research Project," loosely based on the hit movie "The Blair Witch Project." The video illustrated the importance of legal research and included students, librarians and even the dean as actors.

Use audiovisual tools for added impact. "The Legal Research Project" used digital video to deliver a short but powerful message to its target audience. Washoe County Law Library in Reno, Nev., produced an "infomercial" television program that is broadcast weekly on a local government service channel. The program contains an introduction to the library, an educational segment on using the Internet for legal research and a testimonial about the library's "Lawyer in the Library" program. The library receives positive comments from users, who request handouts on Internet legal research or attend the program so cleverly marketed in the "infomercial."

Use nontraditional handouts and flyers. Mariann Storck, legal information specialist in the U.S. Attorney's Office in Denver (inspired by the small flat magnets listing a company name and phone number), created a card-sized "cheat sheet" for a new electronic resource and posted them by users' terminals. Fulton County Law Library in Atlanta uses a business card listing its top recommended Web sites with the library's name prominently on the card. Try combining the two: Make a business card magnet for the library. Adhesive-backed magnets can be bought in bulk for reasonable prices — e.g., 50 adhesive-backed business card magnets can be purchased for \$9.95 plus shipping at <http://shopping.yahoo.com>.

Try a calendar/bookmark, like the one used by the Social Law Library in Boston. One side is a calendar arranged by the membership year of the library along with all of the basic contact information for the library. The flip side has the phone extensions for four basic services using the appropriate library terms, such as "circulation," plus a listing of other services with catchy phrases, such as "CD-ROM and Internet training at our

facility or yours." Along the lines of the calendar/bookmark, publish a monthly calendar with the library's contact information and brief entries on training programs that the library will offer. Go one step further and put this calendar on the library Web site as a downloadable file for handheld computers!

Flyers are often overlooked because they are so ubiquitous that they don't stand out. Some industries use posters that have mail-in cards to request information about a service. The Social Law Library has used this idea as part of an advertisement for an author series, said John Pedini, director of media services. The poster uses bold text and contrasting colors. The user sends in the card to be added to a mailing list for future event information. The U.S. Court of Appeals 8th Circuit Library markets its brown bag lunch series with brown bags around its building with event details pasted on them. The brown bags are an unmistakable sign that a speaker will be appearing. Some users have even suggested potential topics and speakers for the series.

I have used an approach based on "roommate wanted" flyers, which have tabs with contact information for interested parties. The Boston University Pappas Law Library created a Web-based research guide for research paper writers that it wanted to market extensively. In addition to traditional flyers and e-mails to faculty, librarians created flyers resembling the "roommate wanted" ads. I questioned the success of this approach because the tabs disappeared from the flyers throughout the library. The answer was in our Web site statistics: In January and February, the guide placed in the top 25 accessed directories.

Take a cue from retailers.

Supermarkets use the shelves close to the cash register for impulse purchases. Minikus reported a 110 percent increase in CD-ROM circulation after using this approach for CDs. Instead of displaying recent acquisitions book covers, keep the actual books close to the circulation desk with the book covers on display immediately above them. To remind users about library rules in an interesting "non-scolding" way, why not imitate a scandal sheet like the *National Enquirer*, using big headlines and bold colors, Storck suggested. I can see the headline: "Spontaneous Combustion or Aliens

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Among Us? — Books Vanish from Library Shelves.”

Get ideas from other libraries

or associations. My initial focus was to extract marketing ideas from other industries, but other libraries have great ideas that law libraries can adapt.

The International Federation of Library Association’s Section on Marketing and Management has posted conference papers on marketing libraries at www.ifla.org/VII/s34somm.htm.

The Special Libraries Association’s annual marketing awards, the “Marketing Swap & Shop Competition,” recognize innovative

marketing campaigns and projects. For more on SLA’s Marketing Section of the Library Management Division, go to www.sla.org/division/dlmd/mkt_sect/about.htm.

The American Library Association’s Public Information Office (www.ala.org/pio)

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