

Marketing Toolkit for Academic Law Libraries
Academic Law Libraries Special Interest Section
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Introduction

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*Censeo, Toto. Nos in Kansa esse desisse.*¹ This saying, purportedly in Law Latin, is the motto of the Law Library at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Roughly translated, it says, “Quiet, Toto. We’re not in Kansas anymore.” At least two generations of law students at UCB have taken this saying to heart as they entered the law library and began their studies in the strange new world of the law.

The motto is just as applicable to the law library today as it has been to the law students. Law libraries also are entering a new world, a world in which many things we previously took for granted are no longer true. Decreasing funding and increasing costs have been a part of our lives for many years, although the law library often occupied a privileged place in the law school when resources were allocated. But with the advent of the electronic revolution, and fueled by the urban myth that “it’s all on the Internet and it’s all free,” many law librarians now find the law library subject to the scrutiny of an increasingly skeptical administration, faculty, and student body. We cannot assume reasonable funding or support will be automatic for library collections, space, and staff anymore. Our strong services and comprehensive collections alone will not protect us from budget cuts in today’s environment. We must have solid support from administrators, faculty and students, who understand our purpose and recognize our contributions. We must actively educate our patrons and promote our services and collections. Law librarians must market their libraries.

Marketing, at its core, deals with establishing a relationship with an institution’s customers. Basic components of marketing include the identification of customer needs and wants, and the development of products and services to meet those demands. Marketing programs define how the organization’s products and services will be promoted, how their use will be monitored and evaluated, and how future activities will be shaped by customer response. Long considered the backbone of commercial enterprises, marketing recently has become indispensable to the not-for-profit sector, including higher education.

¹ Author unknown, probably on purpose.

Libraries that sell services and memberships have long engaged in marketing. They understand that non-responsive services will not bring repeat customers. Most law libraries, however, have not had an active or consistent practice of promoting themselves. Mandatory legal research training and extensive computer labs kept the library full for years. Marketing has been considered unnecessary and somewhat un-genteel in our academic world, and our culture has not accepted it readily. This has to change, just as the ways in which our faculty's and students' use of the library has changed. The benefits of marketing far outweigh any perceived drawbacks.

Surveys and statistical compilations can give library administrators invaluable information about usage patterns, awareness of services and resources, and patron needs from and attitudes towards the library. This allows for informed decision-making, and librarians can structure their services and communications to meet better their users' current needs and anticipate future directions. As changes are made to library operations in response to user input, the users develop a sense of buy-in to the library and an appreciation of its responsiveness. Mission statements and annual reports describe how the library operates and chronicle its accomplishments. Using these vehicles to deliver a consistent message to faculty, students and administrators can lead to a greater understanding of the library's purposes. Use of the facility and its services often grows as a result of a sound marketing strategy. Marketing can lead to an increase in the "moral support" for a library, which often translates into backing for the library's budgetary and operational requests.

The activities identified with marketing are not unfamiliar to law librarians. Many law library staffs develop mission statements, issue annual reports, collect statistics and conduct surveys, and communicate their activities to the law school and beyond on a regular basis. These are the foundations of marketing activities. What is often missing in our efforts, however, is a coordination of the activities, a strategy or a plan, to ensure that the library truly understands its patrons, designs its services accordingly, and conveys a consistent message in all its communications.

It is our hope that the information in this "marketing toolkit" will help law librarians develop their own materials to convey their message to constituents. In designing the toolkit, we concentrated on providing substantive information regarding law libraries. This is where our expertise lies. The articles in the collection fall into two categories: those that will assist in the development of specific types of information (mission statements, annual reports, statistics, and surveys) and those that provide content for your own documents (the unique role of law libraries, the importance of both print and electronic sources, and how academic law librarians add value to the law school). The bibliographies include both types of information, and often cite to general library literature in addition to specialized law library resources. The question and answer section will be dynamic, with new materials added as issues arise.

The logistics of marketing have been left to the experts. The bibliography on marketing information cites numerous resources that guide and explain marketing decisions. The Academic Law Libraries SIS materials were developed with the structure of ACRL's

“@your library: Toolkit for Academic and Research Libraries” in mind. The Toolkit has strategies, case studies, customizable materials, and resource lists among its contents. It is a highly useful resource for law librarians who wish to increase the visibility of their services and collections. Copies can be ordered from ACRL or downloaded from its web site at <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/marketingyourlib/marketingyour.htm>. ACRL also offers a “Participant Manual” and a series of PowerPoint presentations to assist in developing and implementing a comprehensive academic library marketing strategy. The information, developed in conjunction with the 3M Corporation, is available at <http://cms.3m.com/cms/US/en/2-115/czrRzFZ/view.jhtml>.

Marketing generally goes hand-in-hand with strategic planning. The two activities inform each other as law librarians manage change and make sure that the law library remains flexible and responsive in its operations. Library strategic planning is a discrete process that is covered well in the existing literature, including a comprehensive approach in *Strategic Planning : A Law Library Management Tool for the 90's*, by Richard A. Danner (Glanville Publishers, 1991). Because it is an established part of library management, the Academic SIS toolkit does not include information on strategic planning.

We encourage law librarians to use the materials included in the ALL-SIS toolkit and to adapt the information to their own use. We hope that the information found here assists many academic law libraries in their marketing efforts. Further, we recognize that there is strength in communicating the same message, albeit in a variety of ways, across the country. As deans and faculty members receive consistent information from law librarians, they will realize that the academic law library community nationwide is guiding and shaping its presence in the new world.

We're not in Kansas anymore.