Marketing to an Internal Audience at Special Libraries

Daniel Davis

School of Information, San José State University

INFO 231-10: Issues in Special Libraries and Information Centers

Crystal Megaridis

July 29, 2021

Introduction

Marketing and libraries are two things that many, perhaps most, people would not normally associate with each other. Many may consider marketing a corporate function. They might not consider marketing a skill librarians possess, nor one that is necessary in particular in special libraries, with their captive audiences. Both of these are misconceptions. Buehler (2020) wrote that special libraries "cannot afford to sit on their hands and wait for patrons to discover the benefits of utilizing a special library" (p. 59).

Why should special libraries be concerned with marketing themselves? Several reasons present themselves. In a study of 33 academic and special libraries in Finland, Singh (2009) found "a greater degree of market orientation corresponds to a greater level of achievement in the service effectiveness of the library services, the ultimate result being higher customer satisfaction" (p. 127).

Marketing also allows special librarians to communicate what they add to their organization. Affelt (2011) wrote, "Information professionals need to be proactive in touting the value of what they bring to information, rather than waiting to react if the value is questioned" (p. 159). Likewise, Matarazzo and Pearlstein (2008) cited one study whose authors "warned that libraries need to be proactive about promoting the existence of their services and the kinds of information they can provide," which requires "that corporate librarians must be familiar with the business of which they are a part. Libraries, they wrote, also need to analyze information for value and relevance to the organization" (p. 108) in order to promote their services.

Strife (1995), meanwhile, argued that "all librarians need to be concerned about the image of the library in their organizations. This concern is more urgent in specialized, for-profit libraries because an information center lives and dies by monetary support or lack thereof" (p. 418).

Strife's point highlights one of the aspects that differentiates marketing in a special library from a public library setting: the need to market internally. Some of the practices will be the same, as many special library patrons are internal employees, so there is considerable overlap in marketing to them and marketing externally to public library patrons. Wakeham's (2004) statement that "Marketing the library entails making known to users and potential users (within and perhaps outside the organization) the answers to the questions about who does what, when, where and how in relation to information provision" (p. 239) supports this notion.

However, Leerburger (1982) noted that "Marketing the special library, particularly in a corporate setting, often requires a different set of guidelines. Rarely, for example, does the library serve the public as, to a limited extent, do most academic libraries." (p. 104). Addressing Strife's concern about the special library's image thus requires additional efforts. This paper examines the reasons, challenges, and practices for marketing to internal patrons and stakeholders in a variety of special library environments.

Literature Review

For decades, academics and authors appear to have paid scant attention to the need for special libraries to market themselves to any audience, much less internal ones. A search for the subjects "marketing" and "special libraries" (and variations thereof) returned results focused on areas such as the marketing materials holdings of special libraries, or the ways in which special

libraries can help corporations with their marketing operations—for instance, by providing them with market data.

Kotler and Levy (1969) were two of the first authors to write about marketing practices for "nonbusiness" (non-profit) organizations. The authors argued that prior to their article, the "student of marketing" made "no attempt . . . to examine whether the principles of 'good' marketing in traditional product areas are transferable to the marketing of services, persons, and ideas" (p. 10). While making only a cursory reference to libraries, theirs was an important early step toward making sure marketing did not "remain a narrowly defined business activity" (p. 10).

Two of the first works dedicated to helping libraries of any sort conduct their own marketing operations both appeared in 1977. Oldman (1977) spoke to a general library audience with an article that argued for applying marketing techniques to library and information services while advocating for a more user-centric approach when designing and delivering those services. French (1977), meanwhile, wrote what might be the first article about marketing in a special library. In it the author said that art libraries must market themselves as a means of survival during those tough economic times.

In the early 1980s, as economic woes continued in the U.S. and elsewhere, literature about marketing in library environments began to ramp up. As with French, McDowell (1982) cited economic conditions as the driving force necessitating marketing library services, this time for community college libraries. "With the present and impending cuts in higher-education budgets and their consequent impact on student enrollment, many community college library service areas are going to be forced into doing a better job with what they have" (p. 39), McDowell wrote. The author, while noting that "Marketing is not a new concept for librarians"

(p. 39), bemoaned the fact that "few community college libraries are following a concrete marketing plan to increase clientele or public reputation" (p. 39).

That same year, Leerburger (1982) wrote an entire book on marketing for libraries. The first chapter was titled "Marketing: A Response to a Need." That need, again, was economic: "Budget cuts, along with increased prices for books, periodicals and general services, have become so commonplace in today's library that reminders are unnecessary. These increased costs and funding cutbacks have affected large and small libraries across the nation" (p. 5).

This early literature was largely concerned with marketing public libraries to the public. Indeed, McDowell (1982) equated marketing with "public relations, community involvement, and user needs" (p. 39), and Leerburger (1982) wrote, "Public relations, or to use the more contemporary phrase, *marketing*" (p. 6). However, Leerburger's work was also seminal when it came to marketing special libraries to an internal audience. In a chapter devoted to academic and special libraries, the author wrote of the shared economic root problem faced by "Special libraries, or information centers, in profit-making organizations," which "must compete with other departments for the company dollar" (p. 91). The conclusion, Leerburger wrote, was that "nonpublic libraries must pay attention to marketing. They must increase their level of service to their institutions and must ensure that their parent organizations recognize their value and respond to their needs" (p. 91). Zachert and Williams (1986) made an early case for special libraries in corporate settings to focus not on budget justification but on demonstrating, in measurable terms, the library's contribution to company goals, particularly through return on investment (ROI) calculations.

This point about ensuring parent organizations recognize the value of special libraries gained steam in the 1990s. Near the beginning of the decade, Strife (1992) wrote, "Assessment, evaluation, accountability are the buzz word of the 90s" (p. 53). While noting the struggle among academic libraries to prove their worth in the wake of budget cuts, Strife added, "Librarians in specialized/corporate library centers have been dealing with these issues for some time" (p. 53). Powers (1995) saw the potential of the integrated marketing plan to help with this evangelizing effort, claiming it "is a very effective tool for a special library to define and transmit its image, philosophy, and mission within the organizational culture."

In the new century, the recognition of the importance—if not the implementation of actual practice—of marketing in special libraries has become well established, to the point that specialized books were written such as Diamond and Oppenheim's (2004) *Marketing Information: A Strategic Guide for Business and Finance Libraries*. The conversation also shifted from arguing the need for internal marketing to specific tactics. For example, Besant and Sharp (2000) pushed relationship marketing, saying "relationships, broadly defined, thoughtfully categorized and painfully prioritized, become the engines for achieving the library's main values or contributions to the parent institution's purpose" (p. 20), while others such as Balabanidou et al (2009) recommended word-of-mouth marketing. Other authors (Affelt 2011; Murray, 2013; Vilches, 2017; Megaridis, 2018; Nawrocki & Kimball, 2019) have highlighted measuring ROI as a tactic for proving worth.

Not surprisingly, technology such as remote access and virtual reference has influenced the literature in the last decade especially (Gambrell, 2017; Gupta & Savard, 2017; Rogers & Densch, 2017), and especially regarding the ways in which Google has changed user

expectations and provided competition for librarians (Affelt, 2011; Plosker, 2017). This will continue to be a challenge and an opportunity for special librarians moving forward.

Challenges

Differentiating services from Google searches is a specific marketing challenge facing special librarians, but there are also barriers to these information professionals undertaking marketing efforts whatsoever. While the need for special librarians to conduct internal marketing is now well established, there is also still the recognition that not all are engaging in these activities to the extent they should—or in some cases, at all. There are several obstacles standing in the way of special librarians putting their best foot forward in this area.

One rather banal obstacle is the fact that special libraries can be hard to define. Many special libraries are not even called by that name. According to Murray (2013), "Especially in the corporate environment, special libraries may not be called libraries at all, but rather information centers, resource centers, information analysis centers, or various other terms" (p. 277). The same goes for special librarians. Villagran and Ocampo (2019) noted that the Special Libraries Association (SLA) uses the term "information professionals" and wrote that this category includes "a wide variety of titles including librarians, knowledge managers, chief information officers, web developers, analysts, information brokers and consultants." This lack of standardized terminology can create a branding problem for special libraries and librarians and serve as a barrier to their internal patrons and benefactors gaining a firm understanding of what the special library is and what its staff does.

This in turn may result in some organizations and even industries undervaluing special libraries and their services, which could lead to the closing of individual libraries or pose

difficulties in starting up new ones, even where they are needed. Cromer (2020) studied the

corporate biotechnology industry and found the concentration of special libraries in the sector to

be low. The author found that "some companies work with universities to gain access to full-text

journals while others use the rudimentary process of ordering individual articles at a time," and

surmised that "As information and search tools become more complex these organizations are

going to lose the edge of locating information" (p. 43).

The inconsistency in nomenclature might also lead to some potential users not even

knowing about the special library within their organization. One study found that "corporate

managers were not high users of corporate libraries except in the area of business consulting.

Lack of awareness of the library's services was most often given as the reason for non-use"

(Matarazzo & Pearlstein, 2008, p. 109).

Zachert and Williams (1986) observed that "many special librarians have expressed

frustration in their efforts to apply the basics of marketing as it is practiced in the for-profit sector

to their own not-for-profit information agencies" (p. 62). The authors believed that at the time of

their writing, "marketing is in its infancy in application by special librarian" (p. 69). However,

even since then, others have bemoaned this lack of application. Kassel (2002) said "Many

librarians are aware of the necessity for marketing, and yet they are not able to find the time for

it" (p. 7), and a decade after that, and 27 years after Zachert and Williams, Garoufallou et al

(2013) wrote that many librarians still "hesitate to adopt marketing methods" (p. 326).

One reason for this could be a misconception about what marketing is. Garoufallou et al

(2013) believed the hesitancy they spoke of is due to librarians equating marketing with selling,

and "The 'selling' concept is still a taboo to many librarians" (p. 326). Balabanidou et al (2009)

stated bluntly that "the majority of libraries have failed or delayed marketing adoption strategies," and blamed this on, among other things, "misconceptions about marketing" (p. 61). Gupta and Savard (2017) said "Most people seem to see marketing only as the equivalent to advertising or promotion" (p. 3011). Singh (2009) similarly found "the concept of marketing has a poor image" (p. 131) in special libraries with medium-to-weak marketing cultures.

This poor opinion or understanding of marketing might be why some special librarians lack marketing acumen—another barrier to implementing a successful internal marketing program. Wakeham (2004) also posited that "Marketing may take up considerable time of library staff, who may need training in marketing techniques" (p. 240). Nevertheless, it is important the staff take the time to undergo that training or otherwise acquire marketing skills. In order for library leaders to improve their institution's marketing culture, Singh (2009) recommended addressing the "lack of marketing competence and many other conceptual barriers" (p. 129), and stressed "the need for libraries to acquire marketing competences to support their customer-focused operations" (p. 130).

Technology has introduced some new challenges as well, chief among them Google. As with public and other types of libraries, many existing and potential users of special libraries opt "to go straight to Yahoo or Google without attempting to access the kinds of subscription-based information available through libraries" (Wakeham, 2004).

Technology is not responsible for all new challenges, though. Changes and differences in user demographics, preferences, and behaviors are also factors. Wakeham (2004) noted:

Services develop, but so does the marketplace. Hospital-based libraries may find themselves responsible for providing services to Primary Care Trusts and General

Practitioners some distance away from the library stock. Establishment of a new clinical

unit may prompt a specialist collection. The library faces the issue of how to market to

these groups. (p. 238)

Library Users

Another possible impediment to implementing a marketing program not mentioned above

is simply not knowing where to start. Wakeham (2004) recommended identifying the audience as

the first step: "one of the first things to do will be to identify who the potential customers are, the

extent to which they use the library, what they use it for and whether it provides not only what

they need but also what they want" (p. 239).

As alluded to earlier, information professionals in special libraries must work on "gaining

the ear of top management, as well as researchers and other personnel who make more direct use

of library services" (Leerburger, 1982, p. 92). In other words, special librarians' internal

audiences include both employees who actually use library resources and stakeholders such as

executives who may not use the library but have the power to make decisions that impact the

library and its operations.

Murray (2013) wrote, "Most special libraries primarily serve a well-defined clientele . . . .

Because of this, special libraries are typically more familiar with their clients than other libraries

and provide a higher level of service" (p. 280). Getting familiar with the clientele does require

effort, though, and knowing who the audiences are is just the first step. From there, the special

librarian must work to understand the needs of each. When it comes to users, Powers (1995)

wrote, "Successful special libraries recognize and accommodate the real needs of clients and not

perceived needs." Likewise, Wakeham (2004) stated,

Marketing a library service has the objective of engaging people in a relationship, which will encourage them to use the service and to continue doing so in the long term. It entails knowing or anticipating what users want, communicating to them what is available and being able to provide it to a level that is satisfactory to them. (p. 237)

Wakeham (2004) mentioned several ways of accomplishing this, including surveys, attending meetings, feedback mechanisms, casual conversations with current and potential users, focus groups, and joining other departments' projects. "Such activity is one of the ways of marketing the library" (p. 239), the author said.

One nuance that special librarians must be aware of is the difference between what users actually need versus what they want or demand. According to Siess (2006), "*Demands* are what the user asks for. *Wants* are what the user says he or she wants. *Needs* are what the user really wants but probably can't articulate without probing by the librarian" (p. 96). Strife (1992) offered some advice for better understanding these needs:

Keep yourself well informed by reading all the information put out by the public relations department. Have lunch with people from other departments to keep yourself in the information loop. Know what the organization's competitors or partners are doing. Develop good communication with your clients. (p. 55)

Leerburger (1982) agreed that "in order to provide good services and, in turn, to promote them, special librarians must above all keep abreast of developments in their patrons' area of interest" (p. 107). Methods include reading industry journals and other literature, taking courses, and, as Wakeham said, attending meetings to learn more about the organization. These activities

will also have the fortunate side benefits of giving the special library and librarian a reputation for knowledge and expertise.

Executives and Management

The other main internal audience that special librarians must market to is top management, including executives. This audience is critical because, as Murray (2013) stated, "Special libraries within organizations depend directly on the support of management rather than on the expectation of a library's existence within an organization" (p. 278).

Leerburger (1982) wrote, "the special library is designed to provide maximum service to the specific audience that has created the library and, in most cases, pays the bills. Marketing to this audience becomes much easier when it is possible to define, almost to the individual, who will be using the library's services" (p. 104). This is because it helps the special librarian explain to the bill-payers what they (the librarians) do, who they serve, and why it matters.

This simple-sounding task has proven challenging for special librarians. Scott Brown, a "cybrarian" at Oracle, claimed that "the great majority of information professionals working in corporate settings have difficulties concretely illustrating the value and impact of what we do" (Megaridis, 2018, p. 112). Lawton (2016) echoed that "Compared with public, academic and school libraries, special librarians do not have a concrete or substantial body of evidence to demonstrate their value" (p. 181).

Special librarians must thus work diligently not just to get the ear of management, but to demonstrate to the key stakeholders and decision-makers the contributions the librarians make and the value they add to their organizations. Rogers and Densch (2017) explained, "Your goal is to identify, engage, and build trusted relationships with the people who are in a position to

influence your priorities and your role in the company—they are the primary audience to whom you want to market your expertise" (p. 467). According to Kassel (2002), "part of marketing is making everyone, especially CEOs, aware of how information services can increase profits, advance new product development, prevent disasters through due diligence, and safeguard a company's market share with competitive intelligence research" (p. 8).

Some of the same tactics mentioned for targeting library users can work here as well, especially attending meetings. Reporting structure can also help. Leerburger (1982) cited the example of Exxon, where "The manager of administrative service reports directly to the corporation's secretary. Thus the information center is highly visible from the top of the corporate ladder" (p. 105).

For one-person libraries (OPLs), Siess (2006) quoted St. Clair and Williamson's assertion that an annual report might be "the single most important document the one-person librarians will produce during the year," and suggested that the OPL librarian send the report "to your boss and your boss's boss and, in summary form, to your users. Use the report to inform management of the problems and strengths of the library" (p. 99). Siess also recommended including a short history of the library; figures for finances, usage, and customer satisfaction; and forward-looking statements covering vision and plans.

Marketing Plan

An even more powerful marketing tool for special librarians, however, especially when trying to raise awareness among and demonstrate value to top management, is the marketing plan. These strategic documents are generally outward-looking, used to reach external audiences.

Even in those cases, though, marketing plans play an important role in marketing to internal stakeholders.

The plan often starts with an audit to determine the current state of marketing and to identify areas of weakness and opportunities for improvement. Zachert and Williams (1986) called marketing "a process for determining what information services are needed by company personnel and customizing those services in such a way as to get the company's work done effectively in the marketplace" (pp. 66–67), and described the marketing audit as "the evaluation of how well one has accomplished that purpose during a specific promotion or over a given period of time" (p. 67).

This information should inform what goes into the marketing plan. Balabanidou et al (2009) suggested a "Strategic planning marketing approach including market research, strategic planning and promotion" (p. 61). Above all, it is a must that "Marketing plans in special libraries integrate library goals and objectives with organizational goals and objectives" (Powers, 1995). Rogers and Densch (2017) offered some practical advice in this regard. "Identifying and understanding major changes happening in your company and in the industry helps you align your marketing strategy and messaging with the organization's strategy" (p. 460), they wrote.

Aligning the marketing plan with the overarching objectives serves as guidance for special library staff, but from an internal marketing perspective, it is critical for showing executives and others how the special library serves the mission of the institution to which it belongs. Powers (1995) elaborated on this in explaining that the special library's "mission is part of the organization mission and serves to support that mission. While the special library mission

may support the organizational mission in a very specific and defined area, it is still a support mission."

The special library's goals, therefore, are also support- and service-oriented. Powers's suggestions for strategic marketing planning goals include "promoting leading edge technology to ensure speedy document delivery, creating and maintaining a friendly and helpful workplace, listening and responding to information requests, developing a client-centered library, and providing quality information services." Fulfilling these goals can surely go a long way toward promoting the library. However, even merely communicating these goals as part of the marketing plan can heighten awareness of the library's role and win support among clients and others throughout the organization.

One thing to remember about marketing plans is that they are not static documents. Kassel (2002) counseled that "A marketing plan must be revised annually, on the basis what is working and what's not, and according to new goals, services, or target markets" (p. 9). Some special librarians might consider revising it even more frequently than annually.

Mission Statement

While not part of the marketing plan, the library's mission statement can serve some of the same purposes relevant to marketing to internal audiences. Siess (2006) advised, "You must ensure that the library is seen as a critical part of the organization and that it is involved in mission-critical issues," and said one way to do this is "to write a mission statement and tie it closely to the mission of your organization" (p. 53). According to Wallace (2004), "mission statements shouldn't be literal statements of what the library does. They should focus on the distinctive contribution of the library and the outcomes or benefits it offers" (p. 7). Affelt (2011)

wrote, "corporate libraries' mission statements should convey not only which services will be provided, but also the many ways users will benefit from them" (p. 154). Wallace also noted that a mission statement can help the special library be consistent in its messaging and image among users (p. 6). On the flip side, "A truly bad mission statement fails as both a planning tool and a communication tool. It doesn't provide a clear and measurable statement of intent. And it doesn't communicate why the organization exists and the difference it makes" (p. 9).

Balanced Scorecard

Closely related to both to the marketing plan and the mission statement is the balanced scorecard. This framework includes a mission and vision statement for the library, and incorporates objectives, key performance indicators (KPIs), targets for those KPIs, and actions to achieve them. Nawrocki and Kimball (2019) called the balanced scorecard "the springboard which supports the organization in developing an actionable concept document to which everyone can relate, against which organizational achievement can be measured, and from which the staff can take measurable actions." The authors described a case study in which a defense industry corporate library used a balanced scorecard as "a means to assess its performance and to determine the return on investment (ROI) value of the Library to its customers and to the business." In this way, the balanced scorecard gives special librarians a valuable marketing tool for communicating its organizational impact.

<div align="center">

Services as Marketing

</div>

Marketing plans are relatively concrete entities that special librarians can (physically or digitally) place in front of audiences and walk them through to establish the library's value. A less obvious but equally important marketing tool is the actual suite of services the special

librarians provide. As Rogers and Densch (2017) put it, "Being able to effectively market your expertise is a critical competency for information professionals in today's volatile environment" (p. 472). In fact, special librarians should look to develop additional services that, while being useful to their internal partners, are designed specifically to market that expertise.

Leerburger (1982) made several recommendations in this area. For one, the author suggested that "A well-written, interesting article will inform all company personnel and also show that the library is in the forefront of news and information gathering" (p. 110). Inserting oneself into existing projects can be effective, too. For example, "Many corporations have already started an oral history collection covering both company history and the development of a specific industry. . . . The special librarian should become involved in this kind of information-gathering program" (p. 110). More generally, the author believed that,

> Suggesting new programs to management shows the library as a vital, active part of the organization and not simply an information storeroom. . . . Most important, by promoting the special library to those individuals who are responsible for its future, the librarian serves the interests of the parent organization and also assures that the library will not be ignored during budget time or periods of general business unrest. (p. 110)

Singh (2009) conducted a study that corroborates the effectiveness of this type of service as marketing. The author found that "high flyer" libraries that have strong marketing cultures "put more effort into ensuring the accessibility of library materials by providing adequate promotional guidance to customers" (p. 127), resulting in higher customer satisfaction. Buehler (2020) also noted a real-world example in which "the library looked at ways to engage more with its patrons by methods of new services, workshops, and be more progressively or aggressively

encouraging to show how the library can support research needs" (p. 59). Through these efforts, the author said, the library "created an informal environment that fit the needs of the patrons, marketed their resources and services through social media platforms, and showed how the Law Library is indispensable to its community" (p. 59).

Spreading the Word

Marketing is chiefly about communication. As we've seen, the special librarian must communicate in order to raise awareness of their services and resources and to win support by demonstrating contributions and value added. Rogers and Densch (2017), in describing how their organization's corporate information center went "from 'the best kept secret in the company' to a well-known and valued asset" (p. 455), conducted a scenario-building session for the center and "found a common thread in all the scenarios—the critical importance of systematic outreach and education" (p. 456).

Learning "how the person you are communicating with wants to receive information" (Siess, 2006, pp. 97–98) is an important part of this outreach and education. So is taking a proactive approach and not being shy about self-promotion. Plosker (2017) lamented that "many information professionals remain hesitant to 'toot their own horn,'" yet sharing stories of successful interactions with clients will "help convince those in a similar context that they should take advantage of the resources and consultative power of the library."

Specific ways special librarians can spread the word to their internal audiences to market services and resources include promotion, web and social, and a variety of other tactics.

Promotion

Some special librarians might equate promotion to marketing the same way they do with advertising and selling, and might consider it equally anathema. Promotion and marketing are not the same thing, however, but promotion can play a big part of a marketing program. As Wakeham (2004) explained, "promotion is not synonymous with marketing. It operates as a tool of the overall strategy. A promotional campaign can be thought of as a way of communicating with a specific group of users (or nonusers) about a specific service" (p. 240).

There are many different types of promotional activities, and ones "that may be quite effective for a special library include brochures, annual reports, newsletters, news releases, publishing, public speaking, networking, and alert services" (Powers, 1995). Leerburger (1982) listed some additional activities including promotional presentations at meetings at all levels of the company and contributions to the organization's newsletters and other publications (p. 106). Similarly, Strife (1995) suggested "there are occasions when the librarian has the opportunity to give a presentation to a group in the organization which in turn serves as a chance to market the services of the information center" (p. 416).

Powers (1995) and Leerburger (1982) both believed that word of mouth is the special librarian's best tool for promoting their services. Wakeham (2004) did as well, writing, "When library users are impressed with the service, they talk to their colleagues. Word of mouth (referred to in its internet form as viral marketing) may be one of the most effective tools at the library's disposal" (p. 238). Word of mouth is especially helpful when those spreading the word on behalf of the library are in positions of influence, as discussed below in a short examination of advocacy.

Web and Social

The internet provides additional platforms for special librarians to spread the word. Rogers and Densch (2017) claimed, "Marketing your expertise through a virtual presence requires a thoughtful approach, some new skills, and a bit of trial and error, but it is one of the most important marketing channels you will use" (p. 472). One such virtual channel is a website that is professional in appearance and easy to use and navigate. This website might live on its own but might be easier to chance upon if it appears as a sub-site of the institution's overall site. Wakeham (2004) wrote, "The library website is an alternative entry to the services offered. . . . It is both a product that may itself need promoting and a marketing tool for the wider library" (p. 239). Plosker (2017) urged special librarians to ensure their library's website is "informative, functional and intuitive."

The other main online tool is social. Rogers and Densch (2017) recommended that information professionals "Leverage internal social networking to make yourself more visible and provide a channel for employees to use your resources" (p. 470). Buehler (2020) described how one library "enacted an effective social media presence . . . and created new opportunities for library staff to engage directly with patrons who do not know all the services offered to them by the library" (p. 59). Affelt (2011) cited Facebook and Twitter as two means of marketing corporate information centers. Not only are these channels good for providing information, Affelt said, they also "are excellent conduits for building a tribe for a corporate information center" by making users "feel privy to department information" (p. 156).

Other Tactics

While promotion and online presence can go far in marketing the special library, there are other methods information professionals can explore. Leerburger (1982) suggested starting from day one for new hires, saying "Many corporations include a discussion of library services during the period of new employee orientation" (p. 105). Library-specific orientation sessions can include new hires and current employees alike. Fraser-Arnott (2020) wrote that such a session is:

> an important marketing tool because it offers the first opportunity for library staff to connect with new clients. . . . It offers not only opportunities to share information about the resources that the library has to offer but also for clients to provide feedback about their needs and expectations. (p. 525–526)

These marketing methods involve special librarians talking to existing and potential clients. With advocacy, special librarians can enlist existing users to talk to potential patrons. Having non-library staff spread the word can be even more powerful than the special librarian speaking on their own behalf, especially when the user is in a position of influence and has specific and relatable stories to share about how the library or librarian improved their performance or made their job easier.

This advocacy can and should take place on any level within the organization, but as Affelt (2011) wrote, in particular, "Information professionals need to find leaders in the ranks of upper management who can tout the indispensability and accomplishments of the firm's information services" (p. 162) What it boils down to, the author said, is "when budget cuts are discussed, information professionals need an advocate in the boardroom" (p. 162).

Special librarians can even look outside the organization and enlist vendors as advocates to speak on their behalf. According to Plosker (2017), "The library and the vendor have an important common interest—both are interested in increasing awareness and usage of information center resources. You give vendors the forum, and they give you support, sponsorship money, literature, food, and giveaways!"

Evaluation

How does a special librarian know if all these efforts are working? Several decades ago, Zachert and Williams (1986) contemplated the difficulty special librarians face in answering this question. They wrote, "Failure to differentiate between administrative goals for the operation of the library and marketing goals for getting services and products out of the library may well be the cause of the frustration special librarians voice about the evaluation of their marketing efforts" (p. 66). Since then, however, other authors have noted the utility of tactics and metrics that can help special librarians evaluate their marketing activities.

In order to measure the success of an internal marketing program, it is important to establish baseline measurements before undertaking the program and then compare measurements of the same metrics during and afterwards. Lawton (2016) wrote, "Special librarians need to be able to measure and show their impact and value not only for their stakeholders to ensure continued funding and support but also for themselves" (p. 181). Measuring the impact of the special librarian's services is not the same as measuring the impact of the special librarian's marketing program; however, measuring changes to the services' impact before and after a marketing program can reveal if that program was successful in, for example, boosting awareness of the services, expanding the services' reach and scope, etc.

The marketing program can also have a big effect on user satisfaction. Lawton (2016) advised, "A good place to start for all librarians thinking about impact is with the reader or user" (p. 182). Strife (1992) placed a tremendous amount of faith in user satisfaction, saying the measurement "is a key to evaluating library services. Unsatisfied users can be a reason to cut the technical information budget or eliminate it entirely" (p. 55). This should thus be a crucial metric for special librarians to track.

Perhaps the best and easiest way to measure user satisfaction is through surveys. Powers (1995) observed that because "Special libraries often provide very specific individualized client services. . . . Offering each client the opportunity to comment before, during, and after the service is performed may be an excellent way to provide evaluative services." Strife (1992) elaborated that "One survey is not enough. There must be continuous communication between the information provider and the user," especially since "User satisfaction can always change as new information needs are presented" (p. 55). Beyond tracking user satisfaction, though, Plosker (2017) also noted that "Surveys often have many benefits including an implicit messaging and outreach impact that goes beyond just obtaining comments and feedback about the event." In other words, the surveys not only uncover how users feel about the special librarian's services and special library's resources, they also offer guidance for how to communicate to patrons.

User satisfaction is, of course, not the only metric special librarians must keep an eye on. As mentioned in the literature review, a hot topic among those espousing internal marketing for information professionals is ROI, which Vilches (2017) called "a strong tool for special libraries looking to gather information on their value and communicate that information to their users and

managers" (p. 466). Affelt (2011) wrote that ROI "studies are useful for positioning the corporate library as a source of revenue generation rather than a cost center" (p. 163).

Murray (2013) argued against traditional comparative library metrics "such as gate counts and reference interactions" in favor of ROI, which "is crucial for special libraries. . . executives making decisions about the fate of special libraries are more likely to look at the bottom line than a comparison with another organization's library usage" (p. 278). Megaridis (2018) offered some specific guidance, stating "Measuring the usage helps information professionals demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) that organizations get in exchange for their services. Information professionals can then make fact-based decisions on retaining or changing the information products and services they provide" (p. 108).

As with surveys and many other aspects of marketing, evaluation is not a one-off activity, but an ongoing process. Wakeham (2004) wrote, "evaluation does not close the cycle, it creates a spiral of activity so that what has been achieved can be built upon in future years" (p. 240).

Conclusion

In a sense, all special librarians market the services and resources of their special library by default. According to Wakeham (2004), "all library staff 'market' the library by the way they present what it offers and how they deal with visitors" (p. 238), and one of Siess's (2006) "Four Hard Truths" about one-person librarianship is "We are all in the marketing business. We market our institutions, our services, and ourselves, and we do so all the time" (p. 54).

This does not, however, let special librarians off the hook for actively engaging in marketing activities. Effectively marketing to internal audiences to achieve desired objectives requires work. Plosker (2017) wrote, "Ultimately, the objective of in-house marketing is to

increase the visibility, awareness, and recognition of the library. Increasing user knowledge of the depth and range of library tools and services is part of this too."

Special librarians have the motivation and the means to do this. The means include identifying and understanding the internal users and stakeholders, forming a marketing plan, and reaching out to and educating their internal audiences about the services and resources the special librarian provides and the contributions and value they add to the organization. The motivation is to ensure the very health and sustainability of the special library itself. The stakes are high, but with thoughtful planning and strong execution, the internal marketing program will pay dividends for the special library and the special librarian.

References

Affelt, A. (2011). Best practices for aligning the mission and marketing the services of the corporate library. In S. E. Kelsey & M. J. Porter (Eds.), *Best practices for corporate libraries* (pp. 153–166). ABC-CLIO. https://publisher-abc-clio-com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/9781598847383/168

Balabanidou, K., Garoufallou, E., Zafeiriou, G., & Siatri, R. (2009, November 4–6). *Marketing library and information services* [Paper presentation]. 2nd Biennial International Conference on Services Marketing, Thessaloniki, Greece. http://afroditi.uom.gr/2bic/document/2BIC%20-%20Conference%20Proceedings.pdf

Besant, L. X., & Sharp, D. (2000). Libraries need relationship marketing. *Information Outlook, 4*(9), 17–22. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A61533802/GPS?u=csusj&sid=primo&xid=a148dfbe

Buehler, N. R. (2020). Outreach in public, special, and academic libraries. *The Serials Librarian, 79*(1/2), 57–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526X.2020.1772174

Cromer, E. A. (2020). The status of special libraries in the corporate biotechnology industry. *Current Studies in Librarianship, 33*(1), 27–54. https://search-ebscohost-com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lls&AN=150138724&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Diamond, W., & Oppenheim, M. R. (2004). *Marketing information: A strategic guide for business and finance libraries*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203862469

Fraser-Arnott, M. (2020). Library orientation practices in special libraries. *Reference Services Review, 48*(4), 525–536.

https://doi-org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/10.1108/RSR-03-2020-0017

French, S. (1977). Marketing the art library. *Art Libraries Journal, 2*(2), 11–19.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0307472200020265

Gambrell, K. (2017). *Remote usability testing – powerful tool to understand*

your users. Special Libraries Association.

https://www.sla.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Gambrell-Final-RemoteUsabilityTesting-2017SLAContributedPaper.docx.pdf

Garoufallou, E., Siatri, R., Zafeiriou, G., & Balampanidou, E. (2013). The use of marketing concepts in library services: A literature review. *Library Review (Glasgow), 62*(4/5), 312–334. https://doi.org/10.1108/LR-06-2012-0061

Gupta, D. K., & Savard, R. (2017). Marketing library and information services. In J. McDonald & M. Levine-Clark (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of library and information sciences* (pp. 3011–3018). CRC Press. https://doi-org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/10.1081/E-ELIS4

Kassel, A. (2002). Marketing: Realistic tips for planning and implementation in special libraries. *Information Outlook, 6*(11), 6–10.

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A94406192/GPS?u=csusj&sid=bookmark-GPS&xid=64ca547a

Kotler, P., & Levy, S. J. (1969). Broadening the concept of marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 33*(1), 10–15. https://doi.org/10.2307/1248740

Lawton, A. (2016). *The invisible librarian*. Elsevier Science & Technology.

https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-100171-4.12001-4

Leerburger, B. A. (1982). *Marketing the library*. Knowledge Industry Publications.

Matarazzo, J. M., & Pearlstein, T. (2008). A review of research related to management of

corporate libraries. In D. A. Nitecki & E. G. Abels (Eds.), *Influence of funding on

advances in librarianship* (pp. 93–114). Emerald Publishing Limited.

https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/sjsu/detail.action?docID=453293

McDowell, B. L. (1982). Basic strategies for marketing community college library services.

Community & Junior College Libraries, 1(1), 39–43.

https://doi.org/10.1300/J107V01N01_07

Megaridis, C. (2018). Working in different library environments: Special libraries and

information centers. In S. Hirsh (Ed.), *Information services today: An introduction* (2nd

ed., pp. 106–116). Rowman & Littlefield.

http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/sjsu/detail.action?docID=5295158

Murray, T. E. (2013). What's so special about special libraries? *Journal of Library

Administration, 53*(4), 274–282. https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2013.865395

Nawrocki, S., & Kimball, M. (2019). *Revolutionary ROI: Capturing library value*. Special

Libraries Association.

https://www.sla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SLA-2019-Revolutionary-ROI-Final-Pa

per.pdf

Oldman, C. (1977). Marketing library and information services: The strengths and weaknesses of a marketing approach. *European Journal of Marketing, 11*(6), 460–474. https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000005028

Plosker, G. (2017). *Marketing of library services – partnerships, programs, and relationships.* Special Libraries Association. https://www.sla.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Plosker_Final-SLA_2017_Paper_v2.pdf

Powers, J. E. (1995). Marketing in the special library environment. *Library Trends, 43*(3), 478+. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A16709322/GPS?u=csusj&sid=primo&xid=4312de38

Rogers, A. E., & Densch, K. L. (2017). Marketing your expertise. In J. M. Matarazzo & T. Pearlstein (Eds.), *The Emerald handbook of modern information management* (pp. 455–474). Emerald Publishing Limited. https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/lib/sjsu/detail.action?docID=4981621

Siess, J. A. (2006). *The new OPL sourcebook: A guide for solo and small libraries.* Information Today. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/sjsu/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=3316151

Singh, R. (2009). Does your library have a marketing culture? Implications for service providers. *Library Management, 30*(3), 117–137. https://doi.org/10.1108/01435120910937302

Strife, M. L. (1992). Special libraries assessment or marketing the special library. *The Reference Librarian, 17*(38), 53–56. https://doi.org/10.1300/J120v17n38_07

Strife, M. L. (1995). Special libraries and instruction. *The Reference Librarian, 24*(51–52),

    415–419. https://doi.org/10.1300/J120v24n51_35

Vilches, K. (2017). ROIs and surveys in special libraries: One corporate experience. *Journal of*

    Library Administration, 57(4), 461–467. https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2017.1300457

Villagran, M. A. L., & Ocampo, M. (2019). *Exploring the cultural intelligence of special*

    librarians. Special Libraries Association.

    https://www.sla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Villagran-Ocampo-2019-SLA-Contribut

    ed-Paper.pdf

Wakeham, M. (2004). Marketing and health libraries. *Health Information and Libraries Journal,*

    21(4), 237–244. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2004.00540.x

Wallace, L. K. (2004). *Libraries, mission and marketing*. American Library Association.

Zachert, M. J., & Williams, R. V. (1986). Marketing measures for information services. *Special*

    Libraries, 77(2), 61–70. https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/sla_sl_1986/2