

Marketing to get better mileage from your e-resources

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This chapter gives an insight into how both standard marketing methods and traditional library activities can be used for marketing in the library. It shows why marketing is necessary and how competition is growing, even in academic surroundings. In addition, there are some thoughts about librarians as an occupational group. The author suggests that marketing should be included in all library routines and that publishers should help libraries in both their internal and external marketing activities. The chapter introduces marketing tools which are especially suitable for libraries, and argues that all library staff should be involved, either directly or indirectly, in marketing. In conclusion, some tips about how librarians could find more time for marketing are considered.

At the Second Nordic Conference on Scholarly Communication in Lund, Sweden, in 2004¹, a significant question was asked:

“Is there a magic button somewhere for us just to push and market our e-resources?”

As librarians, we have access to so much information, and have secured so many ‘big deals’ and other comprehensive agreements with publishers, that our challenge is to reach all our users to tell them what is available. Our aim is to reach everyone at our university to show them how many e-journals we have and how easy it is to access them through the library. It may not have been a serious question that was asked but we do appear, in some respects, to be still looking for that magic button.

We still need to do the ‘leg work’ but there is one thing working in our favour: e-resources are in vogue and popular with our users. There are many marketing initiatives already established in libraries, but we need to do more.

Internal marketing

Internal marketing targets management, the senior people, the decision-makers at universities. These people are usually very interested in e-resources but they want to access them in a simple way, and they want to understand them immediately. They also require justification for why the e-resources seem so expensive. Reconciling cost is something we must be ready for and we must have the market research to back our explanations.

There is no magic button to successful internal marketing and we cannot look to publishers, students, researchers or scientists to provide initiatives for us. This first step into unknown territory is always difficult and as a profession we are afraid of making requests in case we are turned down. This prevents us even getting to first base with new, innovative activities. A ‘no’ never means ‘no for always’, it usually means ‘no for now’, and we should keep trying to push good ideas.

External marketing

We in the library world are generally good at marketing to our users, but we are often unaware of our strengths in this area and we need to remind users how good we are. Our users can help us enormously if they think our service is good or, better still, excellent, and if we can then communicate this judgment to our managers through internal marketing.

We need to ask these part-time marketers to help us. However, they are very busy, and have little time to think about the quality of the library services on offer. We need to approach them and use their comments about the library as positive feedback about how important the library is and how crucial our contribution is to the whole university. Our satisfied customers can help us in both internal and external marketing, but we must take the first step. Traditionally in our library community we rarely ask for outside help, so there are no precedents.

The good news is that for both external and internal marketing we can use the same tools. Looking at the marketing literature and theories, Philip Kotler, the most well-known marketing guru whose books are on the literature lists of marketing courses all around the world, says:

*"Marketing is not the art of finding clever ways to dispose of what you make. It is the art of creating genuine customer value."*²

For that reason, it makes sense to simplify things by examining just those theories and strategies that are relevant to our library customers/users. It is always very discouraging when you start to read a book about marketing (usually a very thick one) and the first words are 'profit growth', then 'marketing departments' analyses', 'marketing managers' ideas and theories', and so on. This kind of approach is not really suited to the library world.

Marketing tools

There are several marketing tools that are appropriate for the library and it really does not matter too much which model of analysis or strategy you choose. Stay with the first you select for some time and see if it works. If not, use another one. I would recommend you to try using some of the standard marketing tools such as those at Marketing Teacher³, a web site providing free resources on the topic of marketing.

Customers/users

We still need to listen to our users' needs and wishes and to constantly check that we are on the right road. It is too easy to 'assume' what customers want, especially if it suits our need. Consider, for example, this feedback on what different sectors of the community thought were the most reliable online services:

*"When Elsevier researchers asked librarians and scientists to name the top three most reliable online services, librarians named ScienceDirect, ISI's Web of Science, and Medline. Scientists, on the other hand, named Google, Yahoo!, and PubMed".*⁴

Keep an eye on the less satisfied customers/users. We can learn more from this group than from our friends, who are satisfied and happy with our services and products. It may not be as satisfying to listen to criticism but on the other hand it is very useful for our development. Something you may discover is that your internal customers are not interested in the same information as your external customers. They should be but, after analysing these customers' needs, you will probably discover that they differ a lot from the 'standard' needs and interests of library users.

Analysis, Strategy, Realization, Feedback

Analysis

Our internal and external surroundings are changing all the time. The key factors to be aware of are our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). Threats can become opportunities; weaknesses can become strengths, or the other way around (see Table 1). For example, Google can be seen as a threat or an opportunity.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Table 1. SWOT analysis

We need to have procedures in place for marketing with the SWOT factors in mind, and then to assess this process on a regular basis. When analysing, be brutally honest about yourself and your institution and analyse how the library is in reality, not how you want your library to be.

The most important thing is to cover all four stages in establishing marketing routines for all staff and the whole library.

SWOT analysis helps audit an organization and its environment before the marketing process is started, and it helps us to focus on the key issues such as those in Table 2.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ specialist expertise ■ reliability 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ lack of marketing experience ■ budget cuts
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ new product or service (e-resources) ■ new customer groups (internal marketing) 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ competitor (Internet, Google) ■ technical problems

Table 2. SWOT examples

Strategy

In order to choose the right strategy, it can help to use a matrix. Matrices are for studying how the market looks now and how it will develop in the future. The Boston Matrix (see Figure 1) is a very good example.

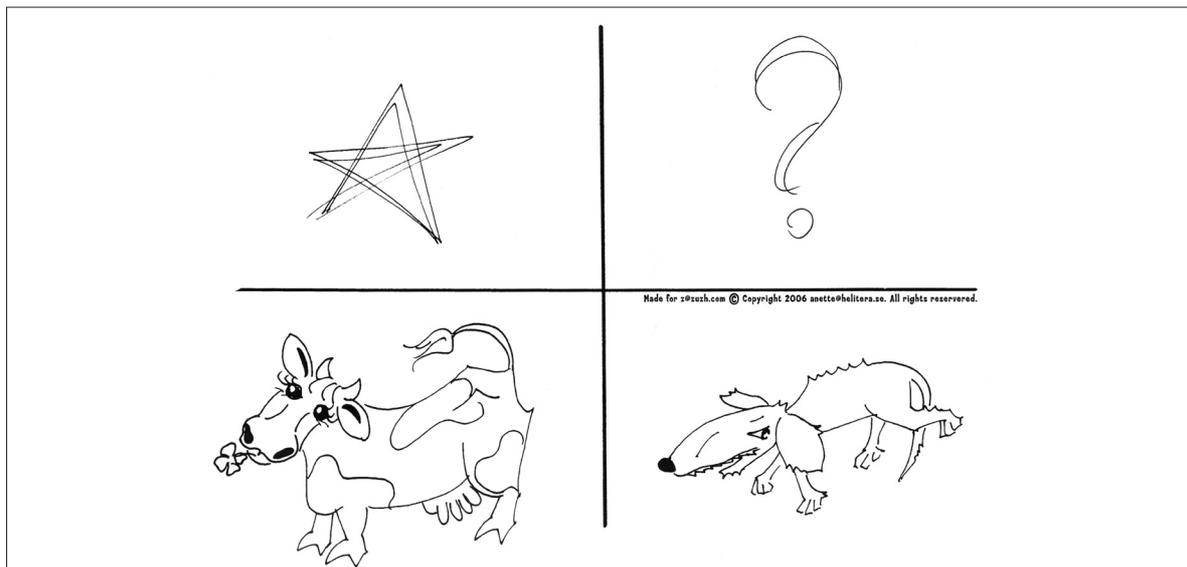


Figure 1. The Boston Matrix

The Boston Matrix uses the following analogies:

- Dogs

Products or services with a low share of a low-growth market. Consider getting rid of these products in order to find time for new services.

- Milk Cows

Products or services with a high share of a slow-growth market. They are good to keep for the time being.

- Question-Mark or Problem Children

Products or services which consume resources and generate little in return at the moment but that could develop in the future.

- Stars

Products or services with high market growth that are easy to maintain. Keep, and build on, your stars.

In libraries, we need to find our 'dogs' so that we can eliminate some unnecessary procedures. We suffer from trying to do too much and from sticking with old methods, while also trying out new ones. We are not just afraid of hearing 'no', but also of saying 'no'.

Realization

Once you feel you know about your own organization, about your environment, about your key products and about some marketing strategies, how do you take the next steps? Remember, you are the experts and you have done it before very well. Now that you know even more about your environment, both as it is at present and, with some qualified guesses, how it might be in the future, you can start to divide different activities in the library between yourself and your staff. Write these down and get colleagues to accept their role. It is easier when staff have been through the whole process of analysis and strategies.

Feedback

We need time for feedback. This is why it is so important to establish procedures for marketing activities. When we continue using the same tools it becomes increasingly easy to overlook the need to get feedback, to see what we got right and what went wrong. It is at this stage that we can learn most, with a view to future activities, although we often forget, or do not give ourselves time for, feedback, because there are new activities, new fires to be put out, new challenges to meet. However, feedback really pays.

All the stages in the matrix are important to ensure that we target the right group with the right products using the right tools.

No time for marketing?

For all the above we need *time*. We do know what we should be doing, we also have some brilliant ideas, but we are overloaded with daily work and have trouble finding time for marketing.

We cannot hope for new positions to be created for marketing librarians who will just work on marketing and besides, who else could better market the library's electronic resources than ourselves? We are the ones who have the knowledge and the understanding. The following analogy from Stephen R Covey sums up the situation:

Suppose you were to come upon someone in the woods working feverishly to saw down a tree.

"What are you doing?" you ask.

"Can't you see?" comes the impatient reply. "I'm sawing down this tree."

"You look exhausted!" you exclaim. "How long have you been at it?"

"Over five hours," he returns, "and I'm beat! This is hard work."

"Well, why don't you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen that saw?" you enquire. "I'm sure it would go a lot faster."

"I don't have time to sharpen the saw," the man says emphatically. "I'm too busy sawing!"⁵

We are very busy, so do we really need to do everything ourselves? Eliminate some procedures and delegate to your colleagues. There is always the possibility of eliminating some procedures as roles change for us and our colleagues.

Many libraries are now admitting the problem with the library staff's more traditional view of marketing for the library, namely, *"We don't need any marketing and I will certainly not work at marketing – I am a librarian."*

However, the new view that we do need marketing is progressively being accepted, especially for our electronic resources as there is a lot of competition with other online resources. We have to market our library and its services and products because nobody else will, or can, do it for us.

Marketing is a team exercise. *"Those employees who do not influence the relationships to customers full-time or part-time, directly or indirectly, are redundant."*⁶

We need all our colleagues to accept the concept, and to contribute actively to direct or indirect marketing.

Combine electronic with manual marketing

We can use electronic resources in our marketing, but it seems that few libraries are using bespoke software to market e-resources and even fewer are using them on a regular basis.

There are some libraries using their own programs, for example Lund University Libraries in Sweden, which have their own system for the management of e-journals and even for the marketing of e-resources.⁷

A number of years ago, we all hoped that these programs would help us and we were very enthusiastic. But times are changing and there are substantial problems with e-mail, for example, with many people just not responding or even communicating through e-mail. For that reason we must also 'go manual'. It means meetings, courses, coffee breaks with staff from other institutions, and whatever other activities we can think of. There will never be too much!

Tips

As part of my preliminary research into this chapter, I carried out an investigation at the UKSG Annual Conference⁸ – partly during my workshops 'Marketing for the Library'⁹ and partly by asking around some delegates during the three days of the conference. In addition, I also held other workshops such as a Joint Workshop on Electronic Publishing in Lund¹⁰. I had some trouble getting people to fill in the forms, as delegates did not have time during the conference and I have not received anything by e-mail or post since, all of which illustrates the lack of time.

However, the results I did get are listed below. Hopefully you will find something you have not tried yet that will suit your library.

*"Word of mouth and personal recommendations are invaluable."*¹¹

There is no doubt that personal contact is extremely important and effective, but it is not possible to use that channel alone – we must adopt other methods such as:

- the library's e-newsletter. (Almost all libraries have some kind of e-newsletter)
- targeted e-mail alerts sent to academics from our information specialists. This is ideal in theory, but unfortunately it usually tends to become amalgamated into the library's e-newsletter above, because of lack of time. The problem is that our customers are overwhelmed by information and would like to have very tailored data
- e-mail to new staff giving useful links and introducing other services
- training courses for staff and students. All libraries are using this marketing method. It is very important these are presented by people with an academic background and good communication skills
- through events associated with specific subject areas. Many libraries use all kinds of events within the university to market themselves and their services. The trick is to have a good overview of what other events are going on within the organization

- through Serials Management software such as TDNet or Serials Solutions
- through the institution's web site. Procedures for regular checking and updating are very important, otherwise they could have a negative impact. A section on 'New Resources' is popular with many libraries
- through the Intranet: used in government and local library co-operatives and consortia. This used to be a very efficient way of marketing, but now the Intranet at many organizations/companies has become less important
- through an A-Z list of all serials extracted from the Library Management system
- hard copies on paper. Do not underestimate paper in all aspects of marketing. So many people working with e-resources are admitting (maybe a little secretly) that they read paper but do not always read electronic information. For example, old fashioned bookmarks work very well and are popular with users. Brochures and other materials also work well
- through the library's own OPAC
- indirectly, through conversation on a related topic
- by reviewing all the library services and realizing that they need to re-evaluate what should be provided, through internal and external marketing
- some libraries are very active and try to be involved in all university/organizational presentations to all the official visits
- through specific user sessions, organized by the library
- open house – show what you are doing at the library behind the scenes
- through different competitions
- through frequent contributions to the University bulletin
- through Library workshops
- electronic monitors and plasma displays in the library
- publicity displays
- one library saw the opportunity for internal marketing at a library ball! It went very well and the library got many new users.

Some other thoughts about marketing

Marketing takes time and you cannot expect results overnight.

Repeat the marketing – and when we are tired of the message we are communicating, that is when both our internal and external customers finally start to listen to us.

Marketing is fun and gives us power to change our situation.

Involve vendors and let them help us in our marketing. Some libraries are encouraging vendors' workshops and see this as a way of marketing the library.

Competition is good for development and it is good for us too. Sometimes we mention Google and Yahoo! as competitors. I would rather like to call them complementary. We in the libraries are the ones who can teach people about reliability and why it is so important, especially now. Is 90% of information from Google rubbish as some would say? It is dangerous to misjudge all other sources of information especially if the whole world around us is using them. Many publishers' content is searchable through Google and Google Scholar and many other developments are ongoing right now such as that between Windows Live Academic and Blackwell Publishing¹². Because of the competition with all other information sources it is difficult to get academics to come to presentations and to read all our information.

More visibility

People are used to searching and using the university web site and, of course, Google and other search engines. We need to be visible now, more than ever. There are many scientists who do not recognize the importance of a library, as they think that everything is easily accessible through Google. At the 2006 UKSG Annual Conference, Carol Goble commented that she “didn’t realize the work the library was doing for her, so she would be able to access everything from her desk and never go to the library”¹³. This is because we do not market what we do as much as we should.

“Romeo and Juliet didn’t die of broken hearts, they died because of lack of communication.”¹⁴

We still need visits and meetings and all the other usual activities in order to be noticed! Our users and decision-makers at the university must learn to know what we are doing and how many of their results depend on us.

Statistics

We rely a lot on usage statistics, which are very good as far as they go, but we do not seem to use them very much in our marketing. They can be a fantastic tool, but we must change the way we look at statistics, and take a broader view. How would our managers look at them? Try to see things from their perspective. They are probably interested in different usage statistics from the ones we see as essential. In addition, all the yearly reports we produce could be used in both our internal and external marketing.

When asked what some librarians do with such a report every year their answer was, “Well, we leave it with the University President’s secretary”. Other people will not automatically become interested in the library world, but we can make them interested. Our products and services are extremely good and are widely used, and often indispensable. There are ways to conduct marketing, we just need to bring these methods together and sharpen our saws before we begin.

This chapter shows that we do need to be more proactive but we have not yet lost the battle.

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Zuzana speaks (in Czech, Swedish and English) regularly at international conferences, and lectures for seminars and business classes. She created a marketing concept for libraries and published a *Necessary little book for marketing of libraries* (which is in Swedish, but will be translated into English and Czech).

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