***Strategic marketing in library and information science***
**Edited by Irene Owens.**
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This is a compilation of papers originally published as Issue number 28 in 2002 of *The acquisitions librarian*. Collectively, it is a valuable contribution to the literature on service delivery and collection management and should certainly be considered for purchase if the original journal issue is not available. A full index is included.

Marketing is a poorly-understood concept in many – perhaps most – libraries and information services. It is often confused with one of its components, advertising, has tended to adopt "business-speak", and is not well-represented in the professional curriculum. This is unfortunate because every professional, whether responsible for a network of services or a single service-point, ought to know the principles whereby the needs of the communities of users can be identified and translated into products and services that will be valued. Knowledge of the "marketing mix" encourages every professional to think about information products and services, costs of supply, the channel by which the user can be served and the means by which the characteristics of the products and services can be conveyed to existing and potential

users. At some point, most professional education includes each of these components, but what is often lacking is their presentation as a unity: this is where the *strategic* focus becomes important. The encouragement of strategic understanding is important for library and information service managers, but what is vital is the ability to develop and implement strategy. A reading of this collection of papers will help considerably.

There are two main sections to the collection. In the first, "The basis and context of marketing", the introductory chapter by Irene Owens provides a selective survey of the literature on marketing within the library and information science discipline. This is valuable as an introductory guide to concepts, because the context for the review is the "marketing mix", to which is added a study of the literature on relationship marketing and change management. Although not specifically discussing Southern Africa, the sources are broad in scope and sound in coverage. The remainder of this section focuses on the role of marketing and the development of an approach that will be both effective and acceptable within the professional domain.

Roberta Shaffer tackles what is perhaps the most misunderstood aspect within library and information science: branding. In the popular mind, branding is bound up with logos and advertising jingles and has "hucksterish" associations. As Shaffer explains, this is erroneous: "branding" is about the associations people have with a particular idea or product. When we complain that the image people have of libraries is old-fashioned and unattractive, it is our failure to "brand manage" that is the root of the complaint. Essentially, the profession has a strong set of attributes associated with caring and competence about which many users, and those who manage our parent organisations, remain in ignorance. Do we care enough as a profession to undertake the work necessary to understand the relevance *for the user* of what we do and to manage our "brandwidth" so that real brand awareness is developed?

Perhaps we should start by considering recruitment to the profession. Ronald Pollock notes the growing shortage of professional librarians in the United States of America and then documents a survey of library and information science students, conducted at the University of Texas, aimed at discovering what they value when applying for a job. Only 15% regard salary as the principal factor; "work environment" is the leader! It would be interesting to conduct a similar survey in South Africa – and perhaps this is something that LIASA should consider, because the future of the profession depends on public awareness *and* appropriate recruitment. Christine Stilwell's recent article (*South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science*, 70[1]:20-29) provides an insight into the range of student views on the content of the curriculum in professional education, and clearly indicates the need for further research into perceptions of the "site of practice".

Cesar Caballero discusses strategic planning as a prerequisite to preparing a marketing plan. The steps in planning are briefly, but carefully, explained, with several checklists as guides to practical development and pointers to further reading. Glynn Harmon addresses the inclusion of marketing in the professional education curriculum. He provides a fascinating perspective on the effect that the tension between system-centred and user-centred approaches has created, including the vexed question of nomenclature, and warns of the need to understand market perceptions before making changes.

The second section of this collection explores marketing in specific circumstances. Of these, two articles have a broad appeal. Dennis Dillon considers the marketing of electronic resources, making the important point that their value is often poorly understood by potential users because of confusion and competition with publicly-available Web resources. He also warns of the danger of creating false expectations and over-confidence in the ability of electronic resources to deliver *salient* information, and suggests the need to adopt "relationship marketing", which concentrates on building a long-term perception of value. This is an important point, and one which is especially suitable for the concept of service that libraries and information services of all kinds should be seeking to embrace and develop.

Loriene Roy has produced a thought-provoking study of marketing in public libraries. The examples are drawn from North American sources but the organisation is thematic, so the reader can appreciate how marketing can be of significance to specific functions, such as collection management, cataloguing and classification. Roy is adamant that a planned approach to marketing is essential and that advocacy is what will count in the campaign to develop better services, equity of employment and improved salaries. The public library is a fundamental component of the "Information Society", being a channel through which people can gain access to the information necessary for a citizen of a democracy. The crisis of public libraries in many areas of South Africa is fast becoming apparent and the importance of advocacy needs to be understood by all professionals – not just those working in public libraries.

At first sight, the application of marketing to theological libraries and to archives might seem rather out-of-place in this collection. However, the essays provide complementary views which are also of general interest. Timothy Lincoln looks at strategic marketing in theological libraries, and makes the case that in this highly specialised environment there is a case to be made: a useful corrective to those who might think their service too rarefied to need marketing.

Two essays explore marketing in archive management. W. Bernard Lukenbill discusses social marketing, with especial emphasis on reaching minority populations. There are useful practical points about adjusting services to suit a diversity of needs: "social marketing" is clearly of potential value in the diverse cultures of South Africa. Mimi Donne provides an

account of the Task Force on Archives and Society, set up by the Society of American Archivists. As an example of "reinvention" of a profession, it has considerable value: again, it is the kind of task that should be undertaken in South Africa as we enter a period when access to indigenous sources of information is being recognised as of equal, if not greater significance, than conventional sources.

The compilation also includes a second essay by W. Bernard Lukenbill, on the film adaptation and marketing of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the wind*, surely the most unlikely source of knowledge about marketing? Not so! The discussion of stereotypes and cultural perceptions, together with the development of critique around this, is viewed from the perspective of information literacy and shows how powerful this can be as a framing concept for the business South African libraries should be in.

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