

## Marketing Roundtable for Special Libraries

compiled by

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**Conference Abstract:** Marketing our services is more important than ever-our very jobs and libraries depend on it! Whether you are a special librarian in a non-profit, for-profit, or academic setting, come share your successes and gather new ideas.

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We had a lively discussion on marketing issues related to special libraries on a stormy Friday morning in Memphis.

Some of the issues that special librarians face are:

- Our customers don't know what we do
- Our libraries aren't always in a good physical location
- Our customers think they can find everything on Google
- We're not sure if people are reading our newsletters
- Our customers think the library is irrelevant

Betty Anne Wilson talked about the "4 Ps of Marketing:" Product, Price, Place and Promotion (Figure 1). These are the most important issues to bear in mind when thinking about marketing. Betty Anne suggested that we cancel products or services that are not being used. For the remaining products/services, we should market the benefits to our customers, not the features. If the library is not in a good location, perhaps we could offer and promote a telephone service. Betty Anne shared a number of promotional pieces from Memphis Public Library, including a leaflet from the opening of the new central library with the theme "Explorers Wanted." Betty Anne also pointed out that it's very important to get all the pieces of your promotional campaign in place. For instance, make sure your service is fully functional before you launch your marketing campaign.

**Figure 1. The 4 P's of Marketing**

<p><b>Product</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Life cycle of introduction, growth, maturity &amp; decline</li><li>▪ Use surveys, focus groups, etc., to find out what your customers want</li><li>▪ Monitor usage of products &amp; services</li><li>▪ Discontinue services that customers don't need</li><li>▪ Brand everything with your library logo/name</li></ul>	<p><b>Price</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Market benefits not features: time saved, money saved, ROI, etc.</li><li>▪ Use discount pricing to attract customers or increase use</li><li>▪ Premium pricing = premium product</li><li>▪ Show funding bodies that your services are valuable &amp; heavily used</li></ul>
<p><b>Place</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The library should have an inviting atmosphere</li><li>▪ Use the delivery method your customers prefer</li><li>▪ Ensure your services are convenient &amp; barrier-free</li><li>▪ Use phone, e-mail &amp; web to reach people who don't visit the library</li><li>▪ Get out of the library – walk around</li></ul>	<p><b>Promotion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Market when the customer needs the product</li><li>▪ Market each time a customer asks for assistance</li><li>▪ Form relationships with your customers</li><li>▪ Use the PR campaign to enhance your image</li><li>▪ Have a 30-second elevator speech</li><li>▪ Reach new employees</li></ul>

Jennifer Watson gave some marketing examples. A recent customer survey provided an opportunity to both promote library services as well as collect users' opinions of them. Having a prize increased the response rate. Sending out organization-wide e-mails and having a web or Intranet presence are also important. Vendor's posters are available free and are quick to put up. For information on putting together a great elevator speech, see <http://www.llrx.com/columns/guide18.htm>.

Jennifer also reported that Julie Julian bakes fortune cookies and creates her own "fortunes" to insert in them. Here's a useful bibliography/webliography on marketing from Julie Julian that she meant to mention at the session: *Marketing Library Services: an Annotated Bibliography* at [http://www.elsevier.com/framework\\_librarians/LibraryConnect/LCP08/LCP08.pdf](http://www.elsevier.com/framework_librarians/LibraryConnect/LCP08/LCP08.pdf).

Jennifer offered to organize a session for special librarians at the TENN-SHARE conference in Nashville on September 15 and/or the TLA conference in Chattanooga (April 18-20, 2007). Let her know what topic(s) would be of interest and she'd be happy to put something together. You can e-mail her at [jwatso21@utmem.edu](mailto:jwatso21@utmem.edu).

Other marketing ideas shared by the group were having stress balls and notepads produced to tie in with the theme that the library is promoting. People always like anything free -- e.g., a bag with a promotional brochure, DVD, and food -- all on a theme. Getting a new purpose-built library can also really help to encourage use.

Penny Frere talked about how TENN-SHARE needed to be marketed more. We need to make libraries more aware of everything that TENN-SHARE does, and we should even consider marketing to the general public.

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## **Related Reading:**

De Sáez, Eileen Elliott. *Marketing concepts for libraries and information services*. London: Facet Publishing, 2002.

Fisher, Patrician H. and Marseille M. Pride. *Blueprint for your library marketing plan: A guide to help you survive and thrive*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2006.

Karp, Rashelle S., ed. *Part-time public relations with full-time results: A PR primer for libraries*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1995.

Siess, Judith A. *The visible librarian: Asserting your value with marketing and advocacy*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2003.

Walters, Suzanne. *Marketing: A how-to-do-it manual for librarians*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 1992.