

Librarians Share Promotion Ideas at Conferences, Part 1

It's 1992, and we live in a world in which a million messages compete for our attention at the same time. We are virtually bombarded from all sides about what's best to eat and the best place to buy it, about what makes us look and feel better, and yes, even about where to find the information we need. We can use the yellow pages to rent the bait and hook for Bubba. We can run to a bookstore or library. We can even link our computers to online services and discover a whole new world of knowledge without ever leaving the privacy of our own homes. Living in 1992 means that we can pick and choose our resources for the things we need and want in a way that has never been possible before.

The flip side is that if we happen to be one of the providers of these products and services, we have to fight for attention. We can't sit back and assume that people know about us or remember our services. Even if they do, if we don't keep reminding them of who we are and what we offer, someone else will capture their attention and we'll be out of luck—and out of business!

As librarians we are a group of providers offering a service that is tough to explain. It is a much simpler task to describe an exercise machine than it is to describe a research service for tracking mergers and acquisitions. In fact, some of the services librarians provide are so subtle that people might not even be aware that librarians are "doing" them. Librarians can't afford to let that happen. So, this issue of *Marketing Treasures* and the next are devoted to sharing the ideas and techniques that some librarians have used successfully to keep the services they offer in their customers' eye.

The Medical Library Association's annual conference, held this year in Washington, D.C., provided an excellent source of library promotion and public relations ideas in the afternoon poster session held on Monday, May 18th. Several of the poster displays stood out for their ingenuity and effective technique. Not only were the featured ideas valuable, the displays themselves were attention-getters.

Linda Butson, Associate Director of the Information and Media Services at Mountain Area Health Education Center

(AHEC) in Asheville, N.C., put together an excellent display called "Public Relations for the Small Library." It offered plenty of sound and useful ideas that have worked in her library, such as:

- (1) Libraries and information centers don't have to be boring, stodgy rooms filled with quiet books. Make the library environment not only welcoming, but enjoyable. Play educational guessing games that get your customers involved in the library. For example, hand out wordsearch sheets—the games that show lots of letters set up in parallel lines in which you have to find and circle hidden words. Choose words from information services lingo, such as online, audiovisual, microfiche, and the like. Give out rewards for completed surveys (pencils with library logos work well).
- (2) Promote other services and look good in the process. Are there other libraries or resource centers in your geographical area? Help each other out by holding "getting to know you" sessions that point out how other libraries can help your customers and also how they might not be able to provide certain services that you can; you'll highlight your own services while providing another service with good publicity. (This is an effective way to promote your library's networking arrangements and interlibrary loan services.) Hold short sessions on types of resources, such as CD ROMs. Host database demonstrations to promote your expertise.
- (3) Tempt the taste buds and stomachs of your customers by giving away food and by using food imagery. Even the most cantankerous, pretentious personalities will break down under an offer of food. Linda found success with a supply of bookworms—the gummy candy kind!
- (4) Make sure your promotion materials, such as flyers, bookmarks, and posters, use designs that catch the eye while they promote library services. The bookmark Mountain AHEC had on display at the session was well done in colorful violet hues and bold lettering that urged, on one side "check out our books," and on the other, "check out our services."

Pearls of Wisdom

As an information professional, you may have been asked by a client to discuss and recommend bibliographic management software. It can do much for your library's image if you are readily able to talk about the pros and cons of regular database software (for example, the restricted record size of systems like dBase is a strike against them) versus specialized bibliographic management software. And, if you can recommend a good choice, your image as approachable, knowledgeable, and capable is enhanced even more. Research Information Systems, Inc., in Carlsbad, California publishes a booklet called "How to Select Bibliographic Management Software—A Guide for Librarians, Information Professionals and Scientists," that will help you and your customers understand what kind of software suits bibliographic and reference needs the best. The booklet describes everything from hardware considerations to the importance of the program's compatibility with word processing programs.

Of course, Research Information Systems, Inc. has an interest in all this because it produces a bibliographic software management program itself: Reference Manager. Nevertheless, the booklet resists the temptation to pester you to buy the product and brings up many excellent points, such as the benefit to be derived from being able to detect duplicate records and to perform global editing that can change hundreds of records at once. (Keep in mind that some popular databases, like Paradox3, can do these tricks too, but they may not be able to do some other ones your customers could benefit from.) For more information and a copy of the booklet, write Research Information Systems, Inc. at Camino Corporate Center, 2355 Camino Vida Roble, Carlsbad, CA 92009. 800/722-1227, or call 619/438-5526.

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Missing issues must be reported within 3 months of issue date. Missing issues requested after this time will be supplied at the regular back-issue price.

Starting with Volume 5, Number 1, issues reflect the months spanned by the number, e.g., September-October, November-December, etc.

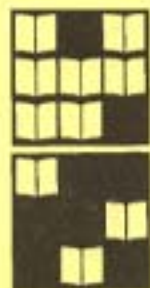
For a shiny look on your next set of promotion materials check out the newest from Paper Direct: Desktop Color/Foil. All you do is tape the foil over a laser or photocopied image and run it through your laser printer or copier. The heat transfers the foil to the toner on the image. When the paper comes out, voilà, a glorious shining colored image! (We tried it in the *Marketing Treasures* office. It's great! It took your editor about two minutes per item to set up the foil and run it through the laser printer.) The rolls are 2" wide x 25' long (an average of 100 applications per roll), and cost \$19.95 each. You can also get a sample pack of 16 assorted colors, 8.5" x 11" sheets for \$19.95. Write Paper Direct, P.O. Box 618, 205 Chubb Ave., Lyndhurst, NJ 07071-0618, or call 800/272-7377 or 201/507-5488.

Another way to look good? Folders from Graphic City. They're high-quality, laminated folders with pockets and reinforced sides. The right pocket of each contains a slot for a business card. They come in regular or foil colors, and you can have your own artwork applied. The price includes stamping your organization's name in one position, either above or below the pocket line of the front or back cover. A minimum order of 50 costs \$3.95 per folder. Write Graphic City, Inc., 8648 Dakota Drive, Gaithersburg, MD 20877 or call 800/327-1070 or 301/975-1070.

Here's a way to promote your services that's sure to get attention: Public Relations by the Pound! Order CorporateCandy®—candy with your name on it! You pick the colors and the flavors. You can even submit camera-ready art to get the exact graphic you want. Containers, such as apothecary jars and acrylic boxes, can also be ordered. Go for the sweet tooth by ordering a minimum of 50 lbs (that's 80-90 pieces of candy) at \$7.00 per lb. Get in touch with Gift Service Inc., 3 Office Park Circle, Suite 310, Birmingham, AL 35223. Call 800/562-4448 or 205/879-4438.

Most of us worry about waste these days, especially in terms of paper products. Well, a company called Weisenbach Specialty Printing has some good news — they turn trash into promotional products. The company produces a line of paper products (which can be custom-printed) as well as a line of recycled polyethylene and polystyrene (CFC-free) items. Whether you need rulers or clipboards, letterhead with envelopes and labels, notepads, self-stick notes, or tote bags, this is where you can find them. Do your part for the environment by contacting Weisenbach Specialty Printing Incorporated at 342 S. Washington Ave., Columbus, OH 43215-5525 or at 614/464-2223. They'll send you a free catalog of all their recycled stuff.

Promotion Ideas *continued from page 1*



Check out our Books

Linda's display practiced what she preached. It attracted attention with passersby inviting them to play games (including one game that involved guessing the number of candy bookworms in a jar) and abundant food imagery (one clever notion: a picture of a cup full of popcorn with the caption "Popcorn Flicks," used for a health promotion film). Linda also displayed information sheets and brochures about Mountain AHEC information services for browsers to take with them.

Jo Ann Bell and Melissa Nasea of the Health Sciences Library at East Carolina University presented the display "An Approach to Serial Cancellation Decisions: Using Subjective Faculty Input and Quantitative Data." Although the title is a little intimidating, the display promoted a good public relations policy.

Cutting down on the ever-rising costs of a serials collection can be extremely difficult, especially when the only solution is often to eliminate titles. Your decisions about what to cut can offend, alienate, and even anger customers.

The overall approach used by the Health Sciences Library was to include the library clientele in the journal title reduction process from the very beginning. The Library Committee, the deans and the relevant department chairs were asked at the outset to contribute their thoughts and ideas about the procedure. The Library newsletter informed faculty members of the situation. Finally, when the process was in full swing, all the university departments were asked to evaluate lists of journals and let the library know which they needed, which they wanted, and which were unnecessary.

This sensitive approach yielded several good public relations benefits for the library. It boosted the image of the librarians by demonstrating that their primary concern was the customer. And because everything about the proposed procedure was made known to the faculty of East Carolina University in detail before it was carried out, more of the faculty supported the idea of cutting the journal collection in the first place. In effect, the Health Sciences Library achieved a delicate balance of two important concerns: (1) the quality of the product offered (titles in the serials collection) and (2) the quality of the library's commitment to serving its clients. In the end, the library had a better serials collection because it was targeted (the faculty input saw to that), and the library had happier customers because they had all been made to feel they played a vital part in building a library service.

Jo Ann and Melissa prepared a simple but effective display that used velcro to fasten signs listing the steps of the procedure, connected sequentially by arrows. The maroon and dark green colors complimented one another, and the whole display was organized, attractive, and eye-catching. Such a display would, in fact, be a terrific tool for educating library customers about a journal title reduction program; its purposes, its steps, progress and final benefits. If you are thinking of carrying out a similar plan, you might entertain the idea of putting an informative display like this in your library as the project is being conducted. Your customers will have a better understanding of what is going on, and the display will encourage participation (it might also encourage a grassroots action to get you more money so no journals will be cut!)

Marilyn Daniels of the Latrobe Area Hospital put up a display remarkable for its variety, creativity, and good promotional sense. In fact, her display was so impressive, that your editor has decided to devote a full article to the library's ongoing promotion campaigns. One example of her ingenuity: Marilyn offered 12-oz cans of Pepsi and Coke, diet and regular, with labels glued around each can that said: "Pop into the Library!" The soda was donated by local bottling companies. Watch for a full description of Marilyn's promotion ideas in an upcoming issue of *Marketing Treasures*.



Graphic used on a National Library Week in Review flyer by Doloris J. M. Phegan, Reynolds Metals Company, Alumina Division Technology Technical Information Center. Shown at the Special Libraries Association Marketing Section Swap and Shop.

Simultaneous to the poster session displays was a comprehensive presentation of 55 different promotion materials used by various medical libraries from around the country, Canada, and England. The "Display of Unique Library Promotional Materials" was coordinated by Bernie Todd Smith and Kathy Downs of the Rochester General Hospital, and proved to be a rich resource for promotion ideas using print media: brochures, bookmarks, posters, library guides, and newsletters. A committee chose the 55 outstanding items from the several hundred pieces submitted to be displayed. Bernie and Kathy did a wonderful job of displaying and organizing them so that people should identify which libraries the materials came from and who they could contact for further information.

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We have selected several of the items displayed to describe in the following paragraphs. Some were chosen for their unusual ideas, and some for their superior design and production qualities.

Concord Hospital Library



*Information Within
Easy Reach*

From the Concord Hospital Library came a brochure/bookmark set that captured our attention because its logo was so unusual. The tree is, perhaps, the Tree of Life, suggesting how significant library services can be to the life of an organization and supporting the core idea behind a healthcare resource facility. In addition, the apple hanging low complements the caption "Information Within Easy Reach."

Mary Edith Walker, Library Director of the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Biomedical Library, submitted a clever bookmark/contest set with a crime theme. The contest, entitled "Murder Most Medical," consisted of a sheet of questions about medical personalities featured in various murder mysteries. For example, "The most famous doctor in detective fiction is Sherlock Holmes' assistant ____." A list of books and databases was provided to help people find the answers. The person with the most correct answers won. For a copy of the questions and answers used in the contest, send a note and a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Mary Edith Walker, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Biomedical Library, 332 N. Lauderdale, P.O. Box 318, Memphis, TN 38101.

Jeanne Becker, Director of Library Services at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, submitted a photograph depicting an original idea that she and a graphic designer created for the Medical Library's bulletin board. The bulletin board display consisted of a poster depicting stacks of books of different sizes and colors (designed using Adobe Illustrator on a Macintosh). Book titles, authors, and editors were printed on light cardboard strips that were inserted into clear plastic sleeves on the book spines. The titles on the spines were changed every few weeks.

Jeanne had the words "NEW BOOKS," placed beneath the bulletin board graphic, to communicate the purpose of the display and to advertise recent library acquisitions. This is a great display for libraries with customers who will check the titles each time they pass by. But a permanent display like

this runs the risk of becoming too familiar—the books always look the same, only the titles on the spines change. Unfortunately, once people get used to something, they tend to stop looking at it, and the display ceases to fulfill its purpose of keeping the library clearly in public view. If you want to try doing something like this, you might think about changing the color and shape of the stacks of books along with the titles periodically, and perhaps adding a new or extra caption here and there. Your editor would also suggest interchanging the book poster display with posters showing computers, CD-ROMs, and other electronic information services, lest your customers perceive your library as "just a collection of books."

A slick library brochure was submitted by Christine Bell of the Babson Medical Library at Newton-Wellesley Hospital. The colors were warm, inviting shades of red and pink on a black background, the designs featured an intriguing combination of curves and geometric shapes, and the paper was a heavy, glossy stock. The information in the brochure was well organized, and the first page contained a table of contents. Another nice touch: Placed here and there were small snippets of information about the people critical to the history of the library. This 12-page brochure, with a pocket on the back page for a bookmark, is a fine example of what can be achieved if you have the time and the money to invest. If you'd like a copy, send a note, a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and \$2.00 to Christine Bell, Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Babson Medical Library, 2014 Washington St., Newton, MA 02162.

In terms of a memorable product name, logo design, and practical brochure/guide format, the Rowland Medical Library's search guide for its online system was a winner. ROMEO is the acronym for Rowland Medical Online. The search guide is in the format of a booklet, with each page a little shorter than the one that follows, so that the content of each page marked on the far right edge, can be clearly seen. This layout eliminates the need for a table of contents. Bright red lettering for these page descriptions draws the reader's attention to them right away, resulting in immediate understanding of the guide's organization.



The next issue of *Marketing Treasures* will continue our review of ideas presented at the MLA conference and we'll look over some Special Library Association Swap and Shop promotional entries as well.

Worth Its Weight in Gold

One of the most valuable promotion resources is a good reputation. Having a good reputation means a greater number of people are aware of your services and a greater number think of you in terms of meeting their information needs. Most importantly, people tell each other about you. You get referrals.

Your customer base may not necessarily grow dramatically when you get referrals, but you will find that your services are used more often and on a more regular basis. As a result, your information resource center will be recognized as an integral, vital part of the larger organization. And, while managing the referral process can be difficult, there are steps you can take to encourage the referral process and "word-of-mouth" promotion in an organized, knowledgeable manner to produce worthwhile results.

To initiate the referral process, identify your potential referral channels. A channel can be anybody, from a customer to someone who has the ability to influence the opinions of others, such as a colleague. Anyone you associate with, casually or professionally, can be a channel. Once you've identified people you think are in a position to make referrals, then the following steps can help you generate a positive word-of-mouth promotion campaign:

First, ensure that people are aware of you and of what you do. The best way to do this is to be visible in your organization and to do your utmost to be a positive, approachable representative of your library services.

Second, realize that people remember the things they see often; therefore, you should always convey a consistent image. Use the same logo and coordinated colors on all your correspondence, promotion materials, signage, etc. If possible, get involved in organization activities outside the library. That way, people will see your library as associated with different activities and it will be recognized during word-of-mouth conversations.

Third, confront the fact that people may be reluctant to recommend you because they aren't sure referrals are welcome. Through an informative newsletter and by encouraging participation in your library's day-to-day functioning (such as a serials reduction program) you can send the message that you want people to use your library and its services, and that you want them to tell others about it. If you really want to help your channels make referrals, supply them with promotion materials describing your services. You'll be pleasantly surprised how effective "library evangelists" are at spreading the word.

Promotion Gems

Service organizations have as much need for marketing as any other organization. Maybe more, because service "products" are hard to classify, and intangible, and often the customer's participation is required for a successful transaction. Since libraries and information resource centers are service organizations, your editor thought the following marketing tips might be useful:

- Be customer-oriented rather than product- or operations-oriented. Study and understand your customer through surveys, then implement or improve the services your customers want. In addition, be sure that customer satisfaction is one of your most important goals.
- Work towards error-free and timely service. Understanding your customer can help in this respect, too. If you are able to isolate the services most desired and utilized by your customers, then you can concentrate on making those services your priority. Fairly soon, you will be completely familiar with the ins and outs of how to conduct those services and you'll provide them twice as fast.
- Involve the library staff as much as possible. The more staff members contribute to the way in which things are done, the better they'll do them. Let them in on the decision-making process. Allow them to conduct surveys and to do research into your customer base. Listen to their impressions of your organization's strengths and weaknesses. In fact, market to your employees as much as you do to your customers. If your staff members appreciate the value of the services they offer, they will be more than likely to spread a good word about you as well as to devote one hundred percent of their effort to working with you.
- Surpass customer expectations. Give them what they want and more. If you can't get customers what they want, tell your customer what you can get them instead, or even better, refer them to the place where the product they seek can be found. Never be stingy with your time when it comes to your customers, and bear in mind that you don't need to teach them how to do absolutely everything on their own. Encourage them to become familiar with your library's resources, but don't withhold your expertise for any reason.
- Don't be wary of introducing new technology and learning to use it. Apart from providing the benefits (such as scope and speed) that automatically come with online services, databases, and networks, technology will enhance other resources—such as the books on the shelves—already available to your customers.

Sparkling Reviews

Library Displays Handbook, Mark Schaeffer. H.W. Wilson Co., New York. 1991. ISBN: 0-8242-0801-3 \$39.00

How often, in the midst of planning or creating a display, have you wondered what the best method would be or how you could produce a real attention-getter? Next time you find yourself wondering, here's a handy book to turn to for advice and inspiration.

With input from the 1989 and 1990 John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award Committee, author Mark Schaeffer has produced a thorough guide for anyone who creates library displays.

The book is divided into three parts. The first provides tips on the techniques and materials needed to produce effective displays. This includes a clear explanation of the fundamentals of design and production, such as the five elements of design: line, shape, space, color, and texture; and the principles of design, namely, balance, simplicity, variety, and unity. Also included are tips on how to draw faces and hands, along with how to construct various useful props (for example, how to make a bookend out of a hanger). As a result, the book is great for the beginner as well as a good refresher course for the experienced hand.

The second part suggests ways to apply the techniques described in Part One, and gives hints for producing different types of displays along with sample projects (from posters for different occasions—one is for a library amnesty day—to bulletin boards and full-blown exhibits). The appendices form a final part in which you'll find lots of practical information: where to buy that special marker, where to find the computer software you need, and where to turn for further reading.

Finally, the author includes a list of dates that can be used as a source for promotional displays: for example, important days in history such as the day the X-Ray was discovered; the days on which the territories became states of the union; the days that honor people or activities such as Rosa Parks Day and National Handwriting Day; the birthdays of well-known artists and authors; and of course, well-known and more obscure holidays.

Along with the dates, the author provides tips on how to take full advantage of them. For instance, for the anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase he suggests displaying books about that event as well as books dealing with the exploration of and expansion into the western United States. The book closes with generic templates you can use to create displays to accompany any dates you choose to commemorate. The third template, for example, is for a tabletop display for a notable person's birthday.

The book's overall approach is both basic and detailed. The organization is careful and clear, making the book a perfect candidate for a well-thumbed resource. Plan your monthly displays ahead of time with the list of dates in the back. Look up how to draw a human figure. Go through the descriptions in Chapter Three on types of lettering to decide what method and equipment you want to use on your next poster.

The illustrations and color plates enhance the book's instructional quality, and the author always makes sure to include handy outlines for each project. These help you ensure that all your bases are covered before you even begin to work.

Thanks to everyone who stopped to say hello at our exhibit booth at the SLA conference. Your editor enjoyed talking with you and appreciated your ideas and comments!

The Crystal Ball

June 28 "Humor in Leadership: A Necessary Ingredient to Success." A presentation by Kaycee Hale sponsored by the Library Administration and Management Association at the American Library Association in San Francisco, CA. Contact: Sue Stroyan 309/353-4110.

June 29 L. PeRCy Awards Dinner and Annual Meeting of the Library Public Relations Council at the Bank of America World Headquarters Building in San Francisco, CA. Contact: 415/433-7500.

July 10 "Desktop Design: Fundamentals of Design for Desktop Publishing." A one-day seminar presented by Promotional Perspectives at the Westin Peachtree Plaza in Atlanta, GA. Contact: 313/994-0007.

July 13-17 "Marketing for the Non-Marketing Manager." A five-day seminar at the University of Michigan, Michigan Business School in Ann Arbor, MI. Contact: 313/763-1000.

July 15-16 "Planning and Marketing Information Services." A two-day seminar led by Darlene Weingand at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Library and Information Studies in Madison, WI. Contact: Jane Pearlmutter, 608/262-6398.

July 21 "Writing Powerful Video Scripts." A one-day seminar presented by The National Video Center in Washington, D.C. Contact: 800/638-5930 or fax 301/874-5788.