

A Crash Course in Communications for Library Supporters

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**Vermont Department of Libraries
2020 Trustees and Friends Conference**

SECTION 1

Marketing 101: Definitions

It's service, not sales. It's about conversation & connection. No pushy telemarketing!

Marketing: Taking steps to move goods from producers to consumers. It's determining what people want, telling them you have it, evaluating consumer satisfaction, and then periodically updating that whole process.

Marketing Communication: The means used by organizations to convey messages about the products and services they offer, either directly or indirectly to the customers, intending to persuade them to use or purchase. (aka MarCom)

Major trends in marketing now are “content marketing” and “storytelling.”

Since you're affiliated with a library, you're already doing MarCom, even if you didn't realize it. So the way you talk about it (publicly and privately) is important.

Target Audience: Each different group of like-minded people is a “target audience.” Each “target audience” has its own language. You can further divide each target audience into smaller segments according to what they have in common.

Brand: A logo, image, wordmark, color palate, typeface, or visual representation; also, people's experiences with, and opinions about, a “brand”

Brand Touchpoint: “... the interactions and exposures that a consumer can have with a brand. Brand touchpoints are very broadly defined and include both deliberate communications from a firm/brand and communications and interactions that the consumer will have with the brand as part of their everyday life.”

www.marketingstudyguide.com/examples-brand-touchpoints

How to Be a Positive Brand Touchpoint

Since you're affiliated with a library, each of you is already a brand touchpoint. So you want to be careful how you talk about the library you're representing, especially since public perception becomes people's reality.

- Be open, helpful, & pleasant.
- Be a positive role model.
- Be a good listener.
- Show your love for your library.
- Always remember what you represent, even in your personal life & posts.

SECTION 2

The Power of Good Communication

Why is clear, careful communication so vital? It affects everything:

- Keeps up library's good reputation
- Helps sustain stable funding
- Increases awareness and usage
- Increases respect for the librarians' expertise
- Increases respect of institution
- Strengthens the library's position in the community; seen as a worthy partner
- Helps ensure inclusion in community projects & activities
- Helps recruit new members for Friends, Foundations, Boards
- Proves the library's value
- Supports literacy skills
- Fights old stereotypes
- Increases user satisfaction

Teamwork

An inconvenient truth: Most people have no idea how many diverse services & materials are available at your library! Coordinated MarCom can help solve that problem. How?

1. Meet with your library's leaders and learn what their main goals are.
2. Each goal needs clear MarCom messages. You can help the leaders set the language for the target audiences you're most familiar with.
3. Create memorable messages in each target audience's language (lyrics). Think of each target's message as specialized song.
4. You want to be like a harmonizing choir, not a cacophony. All supporters need to follow the Library Director's "conducting" to sing the same song.

Marketing Communications is about enthusiastically sharing the goodness of your library. Since you're official library supporters, this is part of your "job" (along with things like fundraising, recruitment, policymaking, etc.).

Your Special Role

Since you aren't a library / government employee, you can say things and take actions that the library staffers cannot. This puts you on the front lines for "Vote Yes" campaigns and some legislative advocacy.

https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/public_libraries/trustees

EveryLibrary can help with legislative advocacy! Contact the PAC for pro-bono assistance before your libraries face any votes on funding (the earlier, the better).

<https://www.everylibrary.org/about-everylibrary>

Help librarians amplify library messages with these actions:

- Share social media posts, blog posts, news, web info, etc.
- Talk up the library with peers, organizational leaders, reporters.
- Help send letters & put up posters.
- Undertake dedicated fundraising.

Target Audiences include:

- Town, city, county officials
- State & federal officials
- Local leaders (Rotary, church, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)
- Local influencers (bloggers, artisans, parents, farmers, etc.)
- Political opponents

Other Stakeholders include:

- Police, Fire, Emergency managers
- Reporters, editors, media people
- Homeschoolers
- Potential donors
- Leaders of other library groups

Organizations that can help distribute printed messages:

- Meals on Wheels / Food pantries
- Grocery stores / Co-ops / Restaurants
- Utility companies
- Post offices
- Health dept. / Medical offices

Main Communications Tools include:

- Friends/Board/Foundation website (for info seekers)
- Email & Newsletter (for members & supporters)

- Social media (Facebook for older; Twitter / Insta for younger)
- Print materials (flyers, direct mail, posters, cards, etc.)
- Phone calls / Door knocking (to build voter / donor support)
- TV / Radio / Newspapers / Podcasts (know their target audiences)
- Influencers / Local leaders (others look to their actions)

SECTION 3

Final Communication Advice

Don't tell your audience what the library has—tell them the outcomes / results of having a good library.

Ineffective message:

“The local library held 46 programs last year, proving that it’s important to our community.”

Effective message for personal donors:

“The local library held nearly 50 classes last year to help people of all ages advance their skills so they could [get better jobs, get better grades].”

Effective message for corporate donors:

“The local library held nearly 50 classes last year, helping laid-off people retrain for new jobs and supporting local workforce development.”

Some people will be moved by data; some will be moved by visuals or videos; some will be moved by stories.

On social media, share posts from the library to your own personal friends & networks.

Effective MarCom can help you reach your service goals through coordinated campaigns and helpful partners. You might try a word-of-mouth campaign.

Key Takeaways

Realize: Communicating your library’s value is vital to the health of all libraries.

Realize: You’re a brand touchpoint; everything that you do matters.

Realize: MarCom isn't an “extra duty”—supporting the work of your library is simply part of the everyday support role.

Remember: MarCom is about enthusiastically sharing all the goodness of your library so everyone can benefit from it.

Remember: Speak in one voice.

Relax: You’re not alone; you have a director and you’re part of a team.

Inspiration to Continue Supporting the Libraries You Love

Research, Tools, Further Reading

Report:

US Public Libraries: Marketing and Communications Landscape. OCLC, 2018

To learn more about how public libraries communicate, OCLC conducted a survey among US public libraries that asked general questions about active engagement efforts. Questions covered marketing concerns and barriers, communication channels, how they use email marketing, and much more.

FINDINGS INCLUDE: As part of communications efforts:

96% use social media

84% post photos, videos, or library information on social media

70% send email messages

40% have a communications strategy, but only 17% say it's current

71% say they don't have the necessary staff resources

25% have marketing professionals on staff

<https://www.oclc.org/research/publications/2018/pl-marketing-communications-landscape.html>

Report:

From Awareness to Funding: Voter Perceptions and Support of Public Libraries in 2018. OCLC

This summary includes key findings from the 2018 research and highlights notable comparisons to 2008 results. The analysis shows that libraries remain valued institutions that most voters have a positive association with and find useful. There continues to be stalwart support for library funding in many communities as evidenced by the fact that the majority of local library ballot measures in recent years have passed. This new national voter data, however, indicates *a softening in committed support for libraries over the past decade. Libraries and library advocates should take action to address this downward trend.*

<https://www.oclc.org/research/publications/2018/oclcresearch-awareness-to-funding/report.html>

Summary of a Webinar called "Libraries as Drivers of Community Development."

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and WebJunction. 2014

Around the globe, libraries are a force to be reckoned with. A recent webinar highlighted cutting-edge libraries in developing and transitioning countries that are empowering their communities to achieve local goals. Presenters Bill Cartwright, President and CEO of Riecken Community Libraries, and Ugne Lipeikaite, Impact Manager at EIFL-PLIP

(Public Library Innovation Programme) led webinar participants on *a worldwide tour of libraries that are creating huge impacts with modest resources.*

<https://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/libraries-are-development.html>

Research Paper:

The Role of Marketing in Revitalizing Library Services in Rural Communities

by Patricia D. Taylor. 2007.

"You must get noticed by those you serve before you are able to serve them. It is *the only way many small libraries are going to hope for survival* in the twenty-first century."

~Stanley Campbell, successful rural library director

<https://www.webjunction.org/content/dam/WebJunction/Documents/webJunction/Role-Marketing-Rural-Libraries.pdf>

Portal:

Links to a collection of articles and webinars on how to be an effective advocate. from WebJunction.

<https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/advocacy.html>

Downloadable Brochure:

Quotable Facts About America's Libraries. from the American Library Assn. 2019

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/ALAquotable%20facts.2019%20web.pdf>

Gallup Poll Results:

In U.S., Library Visits Outpaced Trips to Movies in 2019. Gallup. Jan. 2020

Story with stats shown in demographically segmented charts.

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/284009/library-visits-outpaced-trips-movies-2019.aspx>

Research Publication:

Ideabook: Libraries for Families. Authors: Heather B. Weiss, Margaret Caspe, M. Elena Lopez, and Lorette McWilliams. Global Family Research Project. 2017

The Ideabook, developed in partnership with the Public Library Association (PLA), offers a research-based framework to guide libraries' work in family engagement and shares 54 profiles of the innovative ways that libraries – big and small – support families in promoting children's learning and development.

<https://globalfrp.org/Articles/Ideabook-Libraries-for-Families>