MARKETING Treasures

™

Packaging the Internet as a New Library Service

When marketers package a product, they develop and launch a comprehensive campaign aimed at, among other things, introducing and positioning the product in the marketplace, capturing attention, and gaining customers. Given that product launching is an integral part of any organization's marketing program, we at **Marketing Treasures** wonder: how are librarians introducing the Internet?

It is possible that not a single organization in America marked the arrival of the Internet with an organized, thought-out, preplanned marketing campaign. This makes sense, given the nature of the Internet and how it has suddenly become front page news overnite. But now that the Internet has "arrived," it's time to give it a proper introduction.

In marketing, planning is crucial to success. Each of the elements of marketing—product, placement, pricing, promotion, and public relations should work together to give your product the best possible reception. In this article, we'll first explain why packaging the Internet into products is beneficial to the library and clients; then we'll suggest several Internet services you should consider packaging.

"It is possible that not a single organization in America marked the arrival of the Internet with an organized, thought-out, preplanned marketing campaign."

"...even though the Internet is developing, you can't wait forever to launch your Internet-based products, so let's get started."

Why Develop Products?

Librarians already using the Internet to answer client questions might ask why they should bother to turn these activities into products. We can think of one important reason. Defining a service and building it into a product requires thoughtful consideration and review. In the process you make decisions about the product and learn exactly what it is that you are offering, which in turn helps you to explain the product to clients so they know what to ask for and what to expect.

Turning an activity into a product crystallizes that activity for the library staff and clients. For example, by packaging the activity of answering quick reference questions over the phone as "Quick Serve," you turn a taken-for-granted activity into a product. At the very least, it has a name and a defined level of activity, which helps to tangibilize the service into a product. Clients benefit by being able to request the product by name and librarians benefit because they know what the client expects.

We bet most librarians already rely upon the Internet to bolster their customer services, but they haven't packaged these services into products yet. Usually, waiting to package and to promote a new product can cost you the competitive edge. In the case of the Internet however, there has been some advantage to waiting, for it is still evolving. As you learn the Internet, you see how people are using it, and you learn what you can get from it. During this time you are actually doing informal product

Pearls of Wisdom

It's not too early to start thinking about National Library Week, April 9-15 this year. The American Library Association Graphics Department has created a new line of promotional materials to spice up your celebrations. If you've got leftovers from last year lurking on a shelf, pull them down; "Librarians Change Lives" remains the slogan for a third year. The new materials include posters, bookmarks, banners, tip sheets, pens and note pads. For a free catalog, send a postcard to: ALA Graphics, 50 E. Huron Street/ Chicago, IL 60611. Phone: 800/545-2433, ext. 5046.

And while we're making annoucements, the folks coordinating the Special Libaries Assocation Swap & Shop for this year have changed the format so it will be easier for you to enter your promotion materials. To enter the Swap & Shop you need only send two copies of your materials. Like last year, entries will be judged. But this year the judging will be done by closed ballot given to everyone who attends the Swap & Shop session. Submit entries to: Corilee Cristou, MDC, BIS Information Products, 9443 Springboro Pike, Miamisburg, OH 45342. Questions should be directed to Gloria Dinerman at 908/906-1777.

You're working with one client at the reference desk when another starts walking toward the computer book section. You're tempted to call out, "don't forget to look at **Internet World** in the magazine section and ask about our online computer tutorials," but you know it would seem rude to the customer you're working with. With Tumbler Technologies' Autotalker, you don't need to shout suggestions across the library. As the client approaches the computer books, the Autotalker's sensor detects the client's presence and plays a message you've recorded describing these related resources. For information about the Autotalker, call Alan Josephson at: 408/996-8276.

Public libraries are turning to more creative and hard-hitting marketing messages. **American Libraries** reports that the Connecticut Library Association sent bags of peanuts to the Connecticut legislature bearing the message "Libraries need more than peanuts to survive."

The more you contact clients, the more they will think of you. And the more they think of you, the greater the chance they will send you work. To help you monitor client contact, consider using a database program, such as Aldus TouchBase and Symantec ACT! that is designed to help sales people track their leads and orders. These programs organize information about key customers and generate reminders for phone calls, letters and visits. Some of the reasons to contact clients include: calling attention to an interesting article or newly published report, a note about past work, a thank you, or a follow-up to a recent project.

Look for creative opportunities to contact your clients. Dimension Strategic Marketing Tools' **Promotion News** reports that "heart shaped mugs, chocolate roses, and red hot cinnamon hearts give you a chance to call on your prospects and clients during what is generally a slow time of the year." Elaine Floyd, in an article in the Sept/Oct 1994 issue of **Technique**, reports of a free-lancer who relies on postcards to keep in touch with clients. With the recent hike in postal rates, this option looks more attractive than ever. For an overview of postcard design, see **Treasure Tips** on page 6.

The shaking hands graphic used on page 7 is from a typeface package offered by Letraset, a graphic supplier. The typeface is called Industrials. Every letter on the keyboard yields a different graphic. For ordering information call Letraset at 800/343-TYPE. ■

Internet Products   *continued from page 1*

research. But even though the Internet is still developing, you can't wait forever to launch your Internet-based products, so let's get started.

Internet Products to Package

Besides using the Internet to help you answer client questions, what other products can you, or have you developed? Here are a few we thought of.
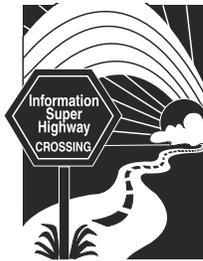
Internet Guru. Depending on your level of expertise, you can advise others about the Internet. It's probably safe to say that many library clients go home to surf the net at night. Why not share your knowledge with them and support them? Start an Internet lunch group. Distribute the table of contents of **Internet World, Wired** and other network-related resources. Start an Internet column in your newsletter. What we're suggesting here are ways that you can tangibilize your knowledge of the net into recognizable products—and become recognized yourself.

Training. Think of the benefits training brings you: When you offer training widely, you can schedule sessions to train several users at once. Clients who normally shy away will step right up to take advantage of the new service. And upper management will surely be impressed that the library is bringing the entire organization into the information future. So have you started Internet training sessions yet? Okay, so there aren't 30 hours in a day. Why don't you rent or purchase Internet training videos and run them at lunch? Coordinate with the personnel department and bring in outside trainers. Just remember to remain closely involved—you are the person who knows how to navigate the information highway.

Information. This is probably the most obvious product to package. Products you can develop from information you capture from the Internet and package for your clients include personalized directories, subject guides, current awareness lists, and highway maps (fondly referred to as pathfinders).

But what about the times when you augment your regular research sources with Internet-based resources. We suggest you call attention to your new research tool. When you use Internet information in research reports, differentiate it from information you get from other sources. Set it off from the rest of the

"The possibilities for packaging information products from the Internet are almost endless."

"For some folks the Internet is a wonderful new toy. For librarians it's an important research asset."

material by boxing it or including it under a special heading. Or how about stamping your responses to inquiries "Internet-Enhanced."

The possibilities for packaging information products from the Internet are almost endless. Even in companies where people are adept at searching the Internet, employees report an appreciation for librarians uncovering information for them. Mary Cronin, in **Doing Business on the Internet** (reviewed on page 6) says of Intel employees, "even though the researchers at this corporation are already heavy users of the Internet . . . they have come to appreciate the importance of library assistance in tracking down elusive sources and locating the most current information on the network."

Home pages—Librarians who have roamed the Internet and are seeking to offer information to net surfers have begun creating their own home pages. As it stands today, this is the ultimate packaging a library can perform on Internet-based information services.

Take the First Step

With all these products to offer, where should you begin? Start by reviewing and making a list of what you're already doing—we've given you some ideas in this article. What other products can you list. Make a list of how you use the Internet. Examine the list to determine if there are any patterns or opportunities for developing these uses into products.

After defining the products, develop a promotion campaign aimed at announcing their availability to your clients. The campaign doesn't have to be elaborate, but make sure it establishes or positions these Internet-based products so clients come to recognize the product and its benefits, and can ask for it by name.

For some folks the Internet is a wonderful new toy. For librarians it's an important research asset. Taking the time to identify and package Internet-based products will help your clients to recognize the value of the Internet and how it helps you to help them. ■

Tell us about your home pages! In an upcoming issue of **Marketing Treasures** we will be reviewing design principles that apply to Home Pages and electronic menus. We'd love to "see" your Home Page. Send us your Home Page address at marketingtreasures@chrisolson.com.

Inside Treasure

Establishing Fees For Service

by Joan Gervino, Director
Center for Banking Information
American Bankers Association

The vision of libraries as businesses has become a reality as more and more have begun to charge for their services. Two trends have impacted this process. The primary impetus for change has been the tightening financial picture in both the private and public sectors, which have made it imperative for libraries to identify alternative sources of funding. Concomitantly, consultants and information brokers have become major competitors of libraries, providing the services that are on the librarians' traditional turf, and yielding positive bottom line results for these efforts that clearly demonstrate the intrinsic value of information. For an established library that enjoys a solid tradition of providing free service and access to its client base, a switch to charging fees requires a total change in culture, procedures, policies and almost every aspect of life in an organization. For these reasons making the transformation to charging fees for service requires substantive strategic and operational planning.

Customer Identification and Analysis

The first step in planning a change as dramatic as the switch from a completely free service to a fee-based one is to determine who the library's customers are and what their needs may be. At the American Bankers Association (ABA), the Library enjoyed a very positive position as a key information center that had been in existence for 82 years. As the competition for resources became fiercer and the economic climate less secure in the late 1980's, we reached a point where an increase in our budget that was consistent with the impacts of inflation and the goal of expanding the services to fill the growing needs of our users could no longer be automatic. Management suggested we charge fees to offset about half of the increase.

Because we are a membership organization of commercial bankers, consultation with them to shape such a change was imperative. Market research to assure that a library's clientele will be accepting of the switch and understand the need for the fees is essential. It also serves to demonstrate whether they see value in the services and that the level of

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quality that is provided is worth the fees to be charged.

Libraries tend to be near and dear to the hearts of their users who feel a sense of pride and ownership that must be nurtured and maintained through quality service and a caring staff. Listening to them and meeting their needs are essential for success, particularly in planning major changes. Through their input, library clientele can suggest alternatives and options that may change the original plan for the better.

Identification of Fee/ Free Services

Libraries and information centers generally offer a variety of fee services, based on their core competencies. In determining these services, it is important to look at staffing, collection support, equipment needs and any legal barriers. Below is a list and brief description of the more popular services.

■ Research generally is the premier service of a fee-based information center. Database searching may be included as part of the research or offered and priced as a separate service. When working with a research customer, it is essential to specifically define the precise topic and any side issues that need to be covered, the time period involved, currency of the required material, how soon it is needed, and the amount of money s/he is willing to pay.

At ABA we make a serious attempt to provide only enough information to assure that the customer can evaluate the issue, obtain the needed information for a business decision and not get bogged down in extensive detail. Targeted research is our primary goal, unless the customer specifically asks for a comprehensive "dump" of everything an a given subject.

■ Document delivery is a highly competitive service. Rapid transmission by fax and e-mail are becoming the norm, with same or next day service almost the outer limits of acceptability. Copies need to be accurate, legible and complete.

■ Access to the collection is a service usually taken for granted by users and librarians. Yet for a library offering fee-for-service, access can generate revenues, and if priced attrac-

Fees For Services   *continued from page 4*

tively, can position self-service research as a low cost alternative to more expensive in-house research services. However, collection access fees may be met with resistance. It may prove helpful to note that the access fee will cost the customer less than the purchase of a single book or reference tool.

■ Information packets offer an inexpensive alternative for research on popular topics. Most fee-based libraries offer these collections of articles, book chapters and other resources. Because packets can yield high-volume sales, it is essential that most of the materials reside in the public domain or be those for which permission to copy is available.

■ Database publishing may include key indexes and bibliographic compilations on the library's areas of specialization. Most libraries have staff with expertise in database design and maintenance. Using this knowledge to develop a unique database can be valuable for the parent institution's industry as well as a source of income for the library.

■ Publications offer a variety of options for libraries, using the specialized knowledge of the staff. Key resources can be either bibliographic or those that analyze and document developments and trends on key issues.

■ Translations on demand of important papers and documents provide another example of the type of service a library can provide on a fee basis. In this case the library can either serve as the broker to obtain the translation from an outside source or provide the service itself, by capitalizing on staff capabilities.

■ Even though the basic thrust of the information center may be to move quickly into the new environment of charging for a vast majority of its services, it may be expedient and worthwhile to offer a number of free services. Some of the ways a library can assist its customers involve little time and effort or may not require special expertise to provide. There may also be a key public relations benefit in offering a limited amount of complimentary services.

■ Quick information responses constitute one of the most prevalent of free services in fee-for-service libraries. Generally they are defined either as those requiring less than 15 minutes of staff time or those that can be

"Quick information responses constitute one of the most prevalent of free services in libraries that charge for all other services."

"The fee-based library requires a sales culture with a pro-active, almost aggressive, marketing and sales approach."

answered in the space of a brief phone call using one or two sources where the answer is readily available.

Quality Focus

The transformation to a fee-based operation must include an examination of service quality. Usually, there must be a quantum leap beyond whatever has been offered in the past.

When fees are involved the accuracy has to be 100%. Batting averages of .300 may be unusually good, but being wrong even 5% of the time in the information business will drive customers to another supplier.

The development of quality standards for all service is essential for both the staff and customers of the library. These would cover timeliness, accuracy, and comprehensiveness. Procedures for ensuring that the standards are met are also vital. Review by peers or supervisors may become part of the process in the new environment to assure that total quality is achieved every time.

Changing from a Free Service Culture

Making the switch from free to fee is a change of 180 degrees for librarians, most of whom enter the profession with the goal of providing a key service to others. Although as librarians, we value the information we provide, the vision of free public access to information is one we cherish. The fee-based library requires a sales culture with little room for our long held vision. Instead a pro-active, almost aggressive, marketing and sales approach is required.

Training is probably the most important first step in making the transition. Not only does the staff need to understand why the change is necessary, but they must also be transformed into the new sales force, if the change is to be successful.

A culture shift this dramatic will not be welcomed by everyone on the staff. Indeed, this may the most difficult step toward changing from a free to a fee-for-service environment. To help ensure the success of this process it is important to involve the staff in identifying and designing the services that they will be selling.

Fee For Services

Marketing Strategies and Corporate Image

A highly pro-active marketing effort is essential to the success of a fee-based library. Even with an intensive marketing program, the initial changeover from free to fee can reduce demand for service by one third or more.

There are several reasons for the decrease. Many previous customers used every available source for information. Once there is a charge customers will become highly selective in their usage. Frivolous inquiries will no longer be a burden for the library, but at least initially, neither will there be an excess demand. Thus to maintain a customer base and cultivate new markets, the library needs to develop and maintain an intensive marketing effort.

Elements of the marketing strategy can include all of the standard marketing tools, including brochures, advertisements, newsletters, press releases, etc. Issuance of these materials must be on a continuing basis to keep the service visible and remind customers of the availability of this specialized resource.

One aspect of enhancing the marketing image is through the packaging of services. This can include a new logo, a new identity, and special folders.

At ABA one of the first steps we took was to create a new name for ourselves. Where formerly we were the "Library and Information Services", the new name chosen was the "Center for Banking Information." By eliminating the word "library" from our identity we attempted to remove ourselves from the image of the traditional free, public institution.

Post Mortem

After the service has been introduced and is in operation, evaluation of the successes and shortcomings of the program is essential to improve and enhance the services.

Response cards offer an immediate continuous opportunity to monitor the quality of the services and their acceptance by customers. Unfortunately, very few are returned, so no statistical proof is provided by their evidence. Each negative response card does provide the opportunity to persuade a customer of the library's sincerity in its commitment to quality service. A standard of

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responding by telephone or personal visit to every unhappy or slightly dissatisfied customer must be the norm. And there must be a policy of satisfaction guaranteed, with an attempt to make good on the service by refunding fees or offering credit to these customers.

After the new fee-for-service has been available for a period of time, a more extensive research effort may be useful. Performing customer survey research offers the opportunity to develop a baseline for future comparison.

As in the planning stage, focus groups with customers can provide valuable data on the kinds of services customers need and what has influenced their decisions on whether to purchase services from the library.

Financial targets and other numerical measures provide additional ways of evaluating the services. As noted before, service levels will drop immediately when fees are introduced. However once the fee service has been established for a period of time, statistics can be used to measure growth or decline in usage.

Income alone is not always an accurate measure, since prices can be increased or lowered based on demand and customer acceptance. Lower usage and a higher price can result in a flat or growing income picture, while customers are gradually turning to other providers. Thus it is essential that survey research, usage data, and the financial balance sheet be examined together for a complete picture of the success of the library's fees for services program. ■

The preceding article was condensed from the paper "Establishing Fees For Services" presented by Ms. Gervino at the 1994 Defense Technical Information Center Workshop, "Proactivity in Information Management— Effective Tools and Techniques." The complete paper, including sections on Developing a Plan, Competitor Intelligence, Pricing Strategies, and Systems Support, is being reprinted in the workshop proceedings. As soon as these proceedings become available, we will announce them in Marketing Treasures.

Editor's note: If you are interested in how other libraries have implemented fee-for-service programs, take a look at the latest issue of Special Libraries (Winter 1995). On pages 21-26, Priscilla Ratliff and Thomas Weeks review three years of experience with fee-based services in a chemical company library. It's an excellent article.

Worth Its Weight In Gold

At the ALA Video Teleseminar last May, Professor W. Earl Sasser, Jr. presented the first session, "Creating the Customer Driven Library." During that session, Sasser discussed key activities of customer driven organizations, including "listen to customer needs by creating listening posts" and "communicate customer needs back to the organization." In this column, we ask: What do these activities look like in the library setting?

■ **Listen to customer needs by creating listening posts.** There are three types of listening posts: the automatic, the impromptu, and the organized. Automatic listening posts take advantage of opportunities to listen to customers through evidence of their use: for example, tracking borrowing habits, use of databases, and research requests. Impromptu listening posts are established when you pay attention to compliments, complaints and suggestions. Organized listening posts are planned endeavors to understand customer needs through such tools as focus groups and surveys. For a more detailed examination of listening posts, see "Research Methods to Gather Customer Information" Vol. 8 No. 1 of **Marketing Treasures**.

■ **Communicate customer needs back to the organization.** No matter how necessary or desired change is, it will nearly always meet with some resistance. When you are about to change your products and services in response to customer needs, there are two main groups of people you must communicate with: upper management, and the clients themselves. The very customers who have expressed the need to prioritize in-depth analyses in favor of rush database searches will still feel frustrated when they request a search and it takes more time than they're accustomed to. A member of upper management who rarely uses the library but likes to make an appearance at the weekly lunchtime video hour will be disappointed when she learns it has become a monthly program. Make sure that these two groups understand that the changes don't represent a loss, but instead a trade-off that better suits the real needs of the organization. Both regular clients and upper management must be reminded that although habit tells them they are losing something, they are, in fact, reaping a net gain. ■

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Promotion Gems

Like most things, writing press releases gets easier with repetition. Why? Because press releases are repetitive—not in content, but in form. Remember learning in writing class about the five "W"s—who, what, where, when, and why—and the one "H"—how. These are the basics of a press release. Let's run through them using the following situation:

Who: The library at Jefferson Hospital
What: A program giving new parents "Baby's First Book."
When: March 15
Where: At the hospital, delivered to rooms on maternity ward
Why: To promote literacy and welcome newborns into the Jefferson community
How: With funding from the "Friends of the Library Committee"

The Formula:

At the top: Write "For Release:" followed by the date you'd like the information published. On the next line write "Contact:" followed by your name and phone number. Skip two lines, then write the title, which should be a straightforward announcement, containing Who and What—"The Library at Jefferson Hospital to Distribute "Baby's First Book."

First Paragraph: This addresses all "W"s & "H". For example, "Beginning March 15, the library at Jefferson Hospital will give children's books to new parents delivering in our maternity ward. The books are part of the library's new program called 'Baby's First Book', promoting literacy and reading from the start of a new-born's life. The program is sponsored by Jefferson Hospital's Friends of the Library."

Second Paragraph: Expand on "what." This might include the name of the book and the genesis of the program.

Third: Expand on "who." You might talk about the hospital's neonatal and maternity units.

Fourth: Expand on "where, when, why, and how." Include, for example, a quote stressing the importance about reading early to children, and the reason why the Friends of the Library Committee is interested in literacy.

To conclude your press release, skip a line and center three hash marks ###, to indicate the end. ■

Sparkling Reviews

Doing Business on the Internet. Mary J. Cronin. Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, NY, 1994. ISBN: 0-442-01770-7.

More an academic work than its zippy cover would lead you to believe, **Doing Business on the Internet** is still of practical use to librarians. We were expecting a how-to book that would break subjects down into small sections to instruct and inspire librarians seeking to use the Internet as a business tool. But this book's broad chapter topics are more conducive to discussing various companies' approaches to the Internet. Although it was never meant to be a how-to, readers will still find much of value between its flashy covers.

Although author Mary Cronin is University librarian at Boston College, the book is not written for librarians, and this adds an interesting dimension. By not limiting the focus to what librarians do with the Internet, Cronin shows a broad range of Internet use.

Chapters in the book include "A Manager's Guide to the Internet," "Reach Out and Touch—Everyone," "Transforming Research and Development," and "The Entrepreneurial Edge." Each chapter looks at how various companies approach the Internet and take advantage of its possibilities. As she describes the companies' efforts, Cronin does a good job of interweaving her contacts' stories with available research. Right along with anecdotal evidence of the importance of the Internet for enhancing communication, Cronin includes a chart, "IBM Internet User Survey" indicating that 61% of use is for communication with peers or customers. She illustrates tales of Internet use for research and development with a graph, "Use of the Internet: Chemical Industry Survey," showing that 34% of respondents use the Internet for collaborative research.

The book is the fruit of the author's 1993 research leave during which she sought to explore the Internet's strategic value for business. Cronin visited 65 companies to "investigate in some depth how and why different types of companies use the Internet, and what impact the global network has on corporate information management." The book succeeds in giving the reader a thorough account of this investigation. ■

"The book is the fruit of the author's 1993 research leave during which she sought to explore the Internet's strategic value for business."

CHECK IT OUT

Treasure Tips

Postcards

The recent postal increase demands a second look at postcards as a means of keeping in touch with clients and informing them of your latest projects and services. Even if you don't use the US postal mail for such endeavors, postcards should have a place in your program plan, for they are less expensive to print than brochures, and their limited space lends itself to creative visuals and pithy copy.

A postcard doesn't give you much space, but we don't consider that to be a liability. Less space means your promotion message will have to be focused and to the point.

To begin, consider the aim of your postcard: Is it a general card to keep you in clients' minds? Or is it meant to advertise a special offer or promote a single service or product? You only have one side of the card to work with, so be precise as to what you expect the card to do.

Successful postcards we've seen often use a dramatic graphic to anchor and visualize the message. Announcements of Internet-enhanced research services could rely on a large stop sign by the side of the road. On the reverse side is the simple message "Internet Driving Lessons Available," with your logo and phone number.

Or how about using the postcard to convey information. Bob Westenberg, a copywriter in Arizona sends out newsletters on postcards! Promoted as the "world's smallest newsletter." Bob's newsletter delivers numerous tidbits of information in an easy-to-read format that is fun to read. The postcard newsletter is sent every month to his client list to remind them of his writing services. (And you don't need a magnifying glass to read it!)

Postcards are easy to produce. You can purchase predesigned cards with perfs from paper suppliers. Or buy cover weight paper and produce the entire postcard yourself. If your postcards go through the US mail, there are thickness and size regulations that you must adhere to. Ask your post office for the guidelines.

So there's no excuse for not announcing your products and staying in touch with your clients. Even a lean promotion budget and a busy library staff can find the resources for sending out postcards. ■