

Library Marketing Management

Thanks to the Northern Lights Library Network, I recently had the opportunity to take an online, six week, asynchronous Library Marketing Management class from the University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign. This is my fourth class in the Certified Public Library Administrator Program offered through PLA. Library Marketing Management covered the basics of marketing management and how marketing relates to public libraries.

Through a combination of weekly lessons, reading assignments, quizzes, and class discussions with 26 classmates from around the country, I was able to acquire an understanding of just how important successful marketing is to a library. By closely looking at how we market our collection, services, programs, and overall culture, marketing can make or break an organization. The class covered understanding marketing management, analyzing marketing opportunities, developing marketing strategies, shaping the marketing product, and delivering marketing products.

Lessons and discussion covered many topics. Some of the topics I enjoyed the most included the following:

- The need to retire the word “free” from marketing. Using the word “free” only devalues the services offered. Perhaps a better way to market a library would be by stating, “Your Library – The best thing you are already paying for”. We need to make sure the public understands that libraries are not run by volunteers and our collections are not made up of donated items.
- While branding is important, front line staff should be concentrating on cultivating relationships. Rather than having a product and finding a customer, we should find out what customers want and fulfill the need.
- In the case someone asks us what we do, we should all have our own prepared elevator speech. This speech should include who we are, what we do, why a listener should care, and a specific example or story explaining what we do or who we serve.
- I also enjoyed articles and discussion about how we shelve our materials. For instance, by interfiling genres or separating genres we are marketing to different groups of individuals. Should we interfile all the westerns, mysteries, and science fiction so that customers are forced to search through a variety of materials in order to find what they are comfortable with? Maybe something different will catch their eye. Or, should we make it simple for those who love mysteries and shelve them all together on their very own fixture?

Again, thank you to NLLN for the financial assistance to take this very worthwhile and interesting course.

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