

# Marketing library services. How it all began.

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## ABSTRACT

*The idea of marketing library services is not new to the library world. This paper shows the development from wishes to improve personal relations between librarians and "the common man in the street" into planned extension work and PR. Stressing the importance of marketing a library service before measuring library performance, the paper deals with the period from 1876 to the 1970's.*

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## PAPER

The history of marketing library services begins long before the concept was born. Even before Samuel Swett Green in his often quoted speech at the ALA Conference in 1876 advocated "improved personal relations between librarians and readers". Yet: you could say that to-day's marketing of library services has its roots in parts of the USA and Northern Europe, in countries with few illiterates, more money, libraries and library schools than the rest of the world. This certainly does not mean that the ideas of libraries reaching out to "the common man" have not occupied many librarians also in other parts of the world. An example is "the library movement" in India at the beginning of the century.

One hundred years ago at the 1896 ALA Conference, Lutie Stearns talked about advertising the library. Thereby the word advertising was added into the librarians' vocabulary. Some years later, in 1903, the Danish library pioneer Andreas Schack Steenberg returned to Denmark after having studied library work in the USA. He praised the American outreaching library work with librarians going out to slums and asphalt parks to spread the joy of reading to children. Extension work became a new concept to be included in library literature. In Harrod's *The Librarians' Glossary* extension work is defined as "activities which are undertaken with the object of reaching groups of people who might otherwise be unaware of the library..." But most of the 20th century library activities as advertising, extension work, publicity and public relations have often been met with resistance from the library world on the whole. Robert Wedgeworth has told how John Cotton Dana in 1910 "horrified some of his more staid library colleagues by using a billboard to advertise the library".

A Swedish librarian who visited the USA in 1916 was intrigued by the way Americans "advertised" a library through leaflets in laundry bags. In the 20's Kate Coplan started to use the windows of Enoch Pratt libraries in Baltimore for "advertising", Joseph Wheeler wrote about publicity in *The Library and the Community* and the British library pioneer Lionel McColvin stated in *Library Extension Work and Publicity* that "Thus it will be seen that we are dealing with just more than just 'advertising'".

Two landmarks in the 30's are Ranganathan's *Five Laws of Librarianship and Publicity* primer by the editor of *Wilson Library Bulletin*, Marie D. Loizeaux. Most of the library extension work had so far grown from local needs, especially in the large cities, where children's librarians were pioneers reaching out to children. Mabel Williams, New York public library, inspired Margaret A. Edwards to turn book talks into what later should be thought of as a public relation method. In the 40's, the world's first National Library Week took place in Australia.

In the 50's many librarians became inspired by the article "The missing three quarter" by the British county librarian Fred Green, and Scandinavian librarians started to use book talks as a method trying to reach new readers.

Early in the 60's the British chief librarian Harold Jolliffe wrote *Public Library Extension Activities*, with the subtitle: *A manual for the librarian and student*. Inspired by Kate Coplan, whom I met in the USA 1963, I named my first book *Det uppsökande biblioteket* (=The outreaching library), and in Germany Martha Höhl named hers *Büchereiwerbung*. In 1965 Kate Coplan & Edwin Castagna edited *The Library Reaches Out*.

Even if words such as "Werbung", "Öffentlichkeitsarbeit" (ÖA) and "Werbemittel" appear in the German library literature already in the 1930's, it was first in the 1960's the German ÖA, the British library extension work and the American library outreach actually became parts of a planned library service.

In 1963 the first course on Library public relations was arranged at Columbia university, New York. But it took some years until it became clean habits to plan for PR in libraries. Early in the 1970's the American Betty Rice wrote *Public Relations for Public Libraries* and the British pioneer K.C. Harrison *Public Relations for Librarians*. At the same time Allan Angoff compiled essays in communications

techniques, called Public Relations for Libraries. In Germany public relations were still hidden in the concept Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, but Sibylle Selbmann's book *Zur Öffentlichkeitsarbeit wissenschaftlicher Bibliotheken* paved the way for public relations in the German libraries.

Nowadays even Bibliotheksmarketing is a German concept.

This short and incomplete backflash into the history of marketing library services shows that marketing surely is not a new library activity, only a rather new concept which can be looked upon as a product of advertising, extension work, outreach, publicity and public relations. Already in 1963 IFLA wanted to bring the attention to all the activities which for decades had been used to encourage people to read. Then IFLA asked librarians from Finland, Germany, Norway, Roumania, Sweden and the USA to write a paper about "Recent developments in the methods by which people are encouraged to use public libraries and improve personal interests through books." The Norwegian librarian called his paper "Public relations in libraries" and I called mine "The outreaching library". Had it been today, I guess our topics would have been marketing...

To use the concept "marketing" the librarians have brought over some management tools from the commercial world. That has been advantageous for the global library world. It has forced librarians to look at the libraries as the enterprises they are, even if you cannot put a price on the outcome.

I have been asked to give some examples on "good marketing". I have seen many public relations activities and marketings aiming to reach all people instead of concentrating on target groups. From my experience most of the costly multi coloured junkmail that librarians send out is not worth the costs. More effective methods are using shopwindows as Kate Coplan did in the 20's or do as Ida Goshkin, Akron public library, Ohio, whom I met in 1963. Goshkin was called group coordinator. She personally went out to all kinds of different groups, telling people what the public library had to offer to them. I believe that no method is as effective as the personal communication between the librarian and "the common man". That knew Hardy Franklin, director of Martin Luther King Memorial Library, Washington D.C., already in 1963, when he was a librarian and "streetgoer" in Brooklyn. That year I studied the teaching of book talks at Western Reserve university, Cleveland and at Rutgers State University, New Brunswick, USA, where professors such as Ruth Warncke and Margaret A. Edwards had taught thousands of library students how to inspire people to read. I cannot think of any method so effective as a good booktalk. To be a good booktalker is an art. To perform that art you have to put yourself into the talk, and you should never speak about anything you do not feel for.

Finally: Now that performance measuring has become a subject for research, I cannot understand why librarians want to measure the use of a library even before they have marketed the service to such an extent, that every individual in a target group knows what service the library has to offer to that specific group.

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As with marketing other library services, a good PR campaign can remind patrons that the library provides valuable resource and services that relate to the user and the university's mission. Marketing virtual reference service varies with library budgets and service types." (Almquist, 2011, 162). According to the Ohio Library Council, activities of public relations include "As you expand your virtual content, you won't be able to do it all yourself. Recruit staff members and volunteers with specific areas of expertise to develop content. Involve a teen with technology skills to build and maintain your social media tools.

How to effectively use marketing in a library. The cycle of true marketing. 1. Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your activity in the library world? I'm one of those people who has always loved and used libraries since I was a child. They don't understand that libraries offer services, events, and classes that are relevant to them. And so, too many citizens are not willing to let tax money or government funds support them. 3. There are many situations when the librarians feel that their marketing strategy is not effective. 4. Since you are promoting the idea of a Cycle of True Marketing for libraries, can you give us more details about how it can be applied in libraries? Do you want people to make the most of all your library has to offer? Do you want to retain, or even increase, your funding?

The online service used a Videotex terminal machine that was accessed through telephone lines. The Minitel was free to telephone subscribers and connected millions of users to a computing network. By 1999, over 9 million Minitel terminals had been distributed and were connecting approximately 25 million users in this interconnected network of machines. The Minitel system peaked in 1991 and slowly met its demise after the success of the Internet 3 years later. Global ecommerce company, PayPal, began its services in 1998 and currently operates in 202 markets. The company is an acquired bank that performs payment processing for online vendors, auction sites, and other commercial users. They allow their customers to send, receive and hold funds in 24 currencies worldwide. How it all began?

The history of marketing library services begins long before the concept was born. (1997). L. Stearns: Books in a Box

- Lutie Stearns established hundreds of travelling libraries in Wisconsin between 1895 and 1914
- Application of marketing in libraries
- Marketing strategies for digital library services (Henderson, Baker & Wallace)
- Marketing library services to the Net Generation (Mi & Nesta).

Remark

- The library literature shows a development from general discussion based mainly on the functional aspects of marketing, to research in the form of case studies grounded in the management literature, more concerned with strategic issues.