

Proactive Librarianship: Marketing and Public Relations A Manual for Workshop Presenters

By Rheina Epstein

This training manual has been prepared following workshops held in Africa on "Proactive Librarianship: Marketing and Public Relations" for librarians and information workers, professional and paraprofessional, working in any type of library. The manual has been created to provide a practical guide for organisers and presenters of workshops in running successful training events in their own region.

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Where I have quoted directly from the work of others the source has been fully referenced. However, it may have happen that, as the material has been sourced over more than thirty years, I may have inadvertently quoted or repeated a sentence or two from the work of others for which I apologise. However I do list all the major sources in my bibliography so that sources that have been particularly useful are acknowledged even if not specifically in the text.

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About the author

Rheina Epstein was formerly Deputy City Librarian Cape Town City Libraries. She has considerable experience in public libraries and is particularly interested in library services to specific groups. She also worked as a school librarian in London. She was very involved with the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science and served both as Western Cape Branch Liaison Officer and National Public Relations Officer. She is currently a member of the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) and a member of the Children's Book Forum.

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She is a registered SATOUR Tour guide.

Introduction

This manual has been prepared to assist organisers and presenters of workshops on Proactive Librarianship: Marketing and Public Relations for librarians and information workers, professional and paraprofessional, working in any type of library.

The overall objective of the workshop will be to explore what proactive librarianship means in practice. The first module is a general introduction to the basic concepts of Marketing and Public Relations and the other modules are practical exercises based on these concepts and applied to specific targets. The local content comes from the participants themselves applying the concepts to their own situations and experience. In this manual the basic marketing and public relations theory will be extended to its practice in the field of library services to children; to youth; to people with disabilities and to adult basic education, including literacy. The material was originally designed for a three-day workshop but because it is presented in modules it can be offered over varied lengths of time depending on what is required to be covered.

It is expected that every participant will emerge from the workshop with enough ideas, facts, examples and notes to prepare various strategies to practise proactive librarianship. These outputs will be more specifically identified as the workshop progresses. It is also hoped that every participant will realise that proactive librarianship begins with the individual who needs certain skills, knowledge of techniques and above all passion. This passion can, in the long term, result in libraries getting more understanding, use, support and funding.

How to use the manual

The workshop is designed to be highly interactive with a great deal of work expected from participants both before and during the workshops. It will involve self-reflection and self-examination, written exercises, oral presentations, small group discussions, questionnaires, lectures and peer evaluation.

Each module or session includes:

- Directions or suggestions to the presenter.
- Questions to elicit responses from the participants.
- Summaries of the key elements to be covered – which may or may not be provided by the participants in their responses but can serve as a guide and checklist for the presenter.
- The script for transparencies.
- Handouts for the participants.

In preparing and presenting the material for this workshop the characteristics and needs of adult learners must be constantly kept in mind:

- They are usually highly motivated.
- Because of their many other responsibilities they have limited time.
- They want to leave the learning situation with something significant.
- And, most important of all for the presenter, they bring to the workshop a wealth of resources – knowledge, experience, skills and practised intellectual ability.

Bearing these characteristics in mind the workshop will be structured around the participants responding individually to the questions posed or discussing issues in groups, which can range from two to the whole table and a spokesperson presenting the collective response either orally or on the flipcharts/whiteboard.

A key responsibility of the presenter is to provide a non-threatening environment conducive to active participation and sharing. It is also important for the presenter to be flexible and adaptable as it will be rare that the presenter will be able to stick precisely to the prepared “syllabus” because of the interactive nature of the modules. The presenter has to be sensitive to the response to certain issues – some may arouse greater interest or be more

relevant – and possibly go down routes unplanned for but still in the same territory – with appropriate adjustments. Participants should be given leeway to deviate as long as the general direction is being followed.

In addition to preparing the actual workshop material it is suggested that the presenter/organisers provide appropriate display material to put on the walls. Posters promoting libraries, reading, book fairs or library weeks; press cuttings from local newspapers illustrating points made in the material; and also relevant quotations, aphorisms and pithy comments will all be relevant. In Africa in particular the use of stories, fables and anecdotes is not to be underestimated. The presenter should collect as many of these as possible illustrating points in the material and ask participants to provide their own.

The programme set out below serves as an example and need not be followed slavishly. Presenters can adapt, modify, revise or simply omit whatever material they wish depending on the participants, the situation, the needs and the time available.

Preparation

Numbers and composition

Because of the interactive nature of the workshop it is suggested that numbers be limited to twenty-five and certainly not more than thirty. The participants can be from the same or different kinds of library service, but it is suggested that like ranks be grouped together to assist the presenter in pitching the presentation at the appropriate level and to create a more productive synergy.

Logistics

Again, because of the interactive nature of the workshop, specific attention must be given to the logistics. The venue must be large enough to seat all the participants sitting in groups of five to six in moveable chairs at moveable tables facing a screen, a large whiteboard and a flipchart on a stand (not necessarily all in position at the same time). This seating arrangement obviates the need for separate breakaway rooms.

Technology

Required: an overhead projector (with an appropriate plug); accessible and reasonably prompt photocopying facilities. Access to word processing facilities is desirable (in case additional material needs to be generated by the presenter).

Stationery

Required: Enough copy paper for copies of handouts (the master copies are to be found in the body of the material); transparencies (acetates); a whiteboard; at least one flipchart; and the varying pens suitable for use on acetates, whiteboard and flipcharts (in different colours). Prestik or a similar product and drawing pins are required – with the appropriate surface to which press cuttings, posters and other display material can be attached.

Personnel

The personnel needs may be met through the existing infrastructure or through staff specially designated for the task. But it is essential that there be somebody designated as a liaison person to ensure that the needs of the presenter be met and it is recommended that enough staff be involved in the total organisation to avoid the danger of too few people doing far too much to the detriment of the smooth and effective running of the workshop. It is also recommended that the presenter be fairly assertive in stating his/her needs, for example for prompt photocopying and for equipment that works.

Recorder

It is vital that each session has a scribe to record the proceedings and more importantly (where required) to record the outcomes of the group discussions – which record will form the basis of both the workshop report and the recommendations (if any).

Pre-registration

When participants register for the workshop they should be sent a copy of the Welcome Letter (below) which asks them to complete an assignment before they come to the workshop. This assignment will be critiqued at the end of the session on Public Relations and participants

should be urged to complete it.

Welcome letter to workshop participants

This letter should be distributed on an official letterhead and introduced by the head of whichever association is organising the workshop as having been sent by the workshop presenter for distribution to all workshop participants who are strongly urged to complete the tasks:

Dear Workshop Participant,

I am delighted that you have registered for the Workshop on Proactive Librarianship and I look forward to a busy and productive time together. In order that we all derive the maximum benefit from the time that we have would you please prepare the following and bring with you:

1. A brief talk on a career in Librarianship and Information Science. You can decide on your own audience and your notes can be in point form (delivery open to negotiation).
2. A short press release on any one of the following:
 - a. A new appointment to the library or the visit of a prominent librarian from outside the country, or
 - b. The opening of a new library or a new service, or
 - c. Any library event such as the creation of an interest or user group or an exhibition of any kind.

You can write it out fully or, if it is easier, you can structure it as points. You can use real people and events from your own experience or a mixture of fact and imagination if necessary.

3. A letter to prospective members of your local library association – again point form if pressed for time.

These tasks will form the basis of some of the practical discussions. But to place them in their theoretical context it is very important that you note down whilst doing these tasks exactly how you approached them – what factors you considered important and your reasons for choosing the particular content, language and presentation. You can also note down any strong feelings you experienced. These private notes can also be in point form as they are intended to assist you in the discussion

If you find these tasks difficult or have any other comments please bring them to air on the day. A word of reassurance – what you prepare, although important, is less important than your awareness of how you went about it.

Sincerely,

Workshop Presenter

Task critique

Please spend a few minutes looking at the tasks you were sent prior to the workshop and which it is hoped you have had an opportunity to do and evaluate them in terms of our discussions. Concentrate on the content of the message and the medium you were asked to use:

The brief recruiting talk

The press release

The letter to prospective members

- What do you like about what you have done?
- What would you change and why?
- Would you be happy to share the way you approached the tasks?
- Would you be happy to share your own evaluation?
- Would you like to read your work to the group to critique?

Programme

The following is a suggested schedule for the workshop – the first day is obligatory as is at least one practical session to apply the concepts. The use of the other modules depends on time available but it is suggested that if the whole program is going to be used, the order of the sessions in the manual be followed.

<i>Day one</i>	
08.00 - 08.30	Registration
08.30 - 09.00	Welcome & general introductions
09.00 - 09.30	Guest speaker
09.30 - 10.00	Introduction to the workshop
10.00 - 10.30	Tea
10.30 - 12.30	Introduction to Marketing in a library context Discusses the basic concepts
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch
13.30 - 15.00	Public Relations in a library context Develops a theoretical understanding
15.00 - 15.30	Tea
15.30 - 17.00	Skills & techniques for implementing Marketing and Public Relations in terms of specific library needs
<i>Day two</i>	
08.30 - 10.30	Library Services to children: why children need libraries & to whom these services need to be marketed and how
10.30 - 11.00	Tea
11.00 - 12.30	Library Services to young adults: characteristics of young adults and what we can market to them
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch
13.30 - 14.30	Library Services to young adults (continued)
14.30 - 15.00	Tea
15.00 - 17.00	Library services to people with disabilities: their special needs and how they can be met
<i>Day three</i>	
08.30 - 10.30	Library Services for Adult Basic Education: the role of the librarian
10.30 - 11.00	Tea
11.00 - 12.00	Workshop evaluation and way forward
12.00 - 12.30	Official closing followed by lunch

There is no reason why the workshop cannot continue after lunch – stamina and travel arrangements allowing – so sessions can be lengthened where necessary.

Introduction to the workshop

The presenter introduces her/himself, then shows *Transparency 1*, Meeting one another:

- Your names and where you work
- Why you became a librarian
- What you hope to learn/achieve by your participation here

The presenter asks the participants to introduce themselves by responding, after a few minutes thought, to the questions on the transparency. Depending on time and atmosphere the presenter may limit him/herself to only the first two questions. The participants are also asked to write down their names and place of work on nameplates in front of them on their tables. If the venue does not have nameplate stands a firm piece of folded cardboard will suffice.

The session scribe is asked to note the answers to questions 2 and 3 on the whiteboard or flipchart.

The presenter introduces the workshop:

- Emphasises he/she is not there to tell participants what to do.
- Explains that he/she hopes to work together to harness the wealth of resources in the room – the knowledge, experience, skills, and intellectual capacity of the participants in the cause of proactive librarianship.
- Introduces the goal, objectives, and hoped-for outputs and outcomes (make a transparency).
- Suggests how a Marketing and Public Relations perspective can be used to help sell and promote libraries.
- Explains the underlying theme – essentially what are we promoting, to whom and how?
- Reiterates that sessions will be interactive with transparencies provided noting the salient points.

The presenter draws up a workshop contract with the participants establishing the protocols for attendance, punctuality, dress, language, cell-phones and so on, and asks if there are any questions.

The goal of the workshop

Participants should leave this workshop infused with the essential component of proactive librarianship, namely a passion for libraries and their importance in the community.

Objectives

To explore what proactive librarianship really means in practice and how with awareness of Marketing and Public Relations concepts and techniques it can be used to impact positively on libraries for particular groups – in this case children, young adults, people with disabilities and basic adult education learners

Underlying theme of each session

- Analysing the user group and its particular needs
- Determining to what extent current practice is meeting these needs
- Identifying what else is needed
- Establishing how these needs can be met in proactive terms relevant to the community being served and to the country.

Hoped-for outputs (results)

That every participant will emerge with enough awareness, understanding, ideas and facts to prepare various strategies to practise proactive librarianship

Hoped for outcomes (consequences)

That every participant realises that proactive librarianship begins with the individual librarian who, with certain skills, some knowledge of the techniques and above all passion can further the cause of libraries in terms of understanding, support, use and funding and also infuse others with a similar passion and enthusiasm.

Marketing

The workshop presenter should ask the participants the following question:

"Together with the person next to you please consider for a few minutes various purchases you have recently made both routine and non-routine. Why did you shop where you did and what role did the salesperson play or not play in the transaction? Now write down in two columns what you think are the positive and negative qualities of a salesperson". Ask the scribe to write up the points as participants give their ideas.

Show *Transparency 2*, Marketing: positive and negative qualities of sales people:

Positive qualities

- Communication skills
- Articulate
- Outgoing/extrovert (culture)
- Assertiveness
- Appropriate appearance and expression
- Knowledge of product
- Belief in product
- Sensitivity to client-personality
- Sensitivity to client's needs/timing
- Honesty and credibility
- Judgement in whom to approach
- Energy
- Willingness to go the extra mile
- Strong self-esteem
- Proactive
- Understanding of business environment – what is possible/not possible

Negative qualities

- Pushy
- Over-talkative
- Avoidance of eye contact
- Insincerity

Compare list on transparency with qualities provided by participants, and ask:

- Are there any qualities there that are applicable to librarians?
- Why is the issue of personal qualities being emphasised?

Explain that the marketing strategy that is going to be proposed:

- Does not require additional money or staff.
- Does not require elaborate marketing machinery.
- Does not even necessarily require basic restructuring of existing organisations.

What is required is proactive library staff with:

- Defined personality characteristics as we discussed above and a specific service attitude towards individuals, groups and communities
- An awareness of marketing principles, and
- A fervent belief in libraries

It is essential that librarians can relate to people, like people and can communicate successfully. Anybody who cannot communicate, relate well or does not really like people should not work in libraries (no, not even in cataloguing). The key components of library marketing are the individual librarians, the library assistants, the library typists and the library cleaners, all of whom comprise the library marketing force. The individual is the essential element of the marketing strategy. By reducing the essence of this marketing strategy to

individuals it is possible to make it happen.

We compared the qualities of librarians and salespeople. If we are salespeople what are we selling? What is our product? A product is defined as “an idea, a physical entity (a good), a service or any combination of the three that is an element of exchange to satisfy an individual or a business objective” (Bearden, Ingram and LaForge, p.205). Product analysis is analysing what services we are offering bearing in mind the intangible nature of service-based business.

Ask participants the following:

"Please talk to the person nearest to you who works in a similar library and list first of all library products that are common to all libraries and the products that are specific to your library. Do you think there is a difference?"

Ask the scribe to write down products suggested but to separate types of libraries.

Show *Transparency 3*, Product analysis. This is a checklist – but remember the often intangible nature of what follows...

For all libraries

- Information for different needs (who are the competitors who also provide information?)
- Value-added service – selection, organisation, format, accessibility
- Time and money saving

For public libraries

- Educational, social and cultural development
- Support, reassurance
- Social contact
- Community venue/community advertising
- Contribution to Community Development – informed, empowered and enabled community with social and welfare and economic benefits

For special and departmental libraries

- Not only information but knowledge and convenience
- Experience, competence, retrieval skills
- Competitive edge prestige & status
- Support for creative processes
- Improved performance at all levels
- Contributing to goals of organisation and realising its values, namely innovative reputation, increased use of products, profit margins

For university libraries

- Learning materials for students
- Teaching and research materials for staff
- Inducement to attract donors, good staff, good students

And finally, those who fund library services...

- What are they getting for their money and support?

Danger signals!

As you can see you are already practising marketing or at least selling in terms of being aware of your products. But has anybody noticed any danger signals? Have you noticed that until now the discussion has been librarian-centred and product-centred? What about our users, that is our markets? *Ask participants* the following question, which they can respond to individually. The scribe should write down the key points.

What is the relationship between what we consider our products and those whom we hope to serve?

What is marketing?

This relationship will become clearer when we consider *Transparency 4*:

- Marketing is the entire activity of establishing our markets or publics,
- determining their needs,
- investigating which products or service the various publics believe will fulfil these needs,
- packaging our products or services,
- promoting them, and

- distributing them so that they are in the right place at the right time (which should remind you of a basic tenet of librarianship – getting the right book to the right reader at the right time!)

Successful marketing is being able to persuade the public that the product or service we offer will meet their needs and very often the needs of which they were unaware. What are these needs? For this we turn to:

Market research or user needs – analysing your markets, their needs and expectations

A major tenet of modern marketing is that an organisation can operate more effectively by concentrating its efforts and resources on meeting the selected needs of specific groups of users or markets rather than trying to be all things to all people.

Each community whether it is the public or university or business or departmental community is not a broad amorphous public to whom we can promote the library as a good thing. Each broader community must be broken down into smaller groups, each not only with its own unique information needs but also with its own information sourcing behaviour. We must assess which characteristics distinguish these different publics and plan accordingly. If we can group our public by those characteristics which most significantly indicate their actual preference, potential preference, inclination or need of library information we can then direct our promotion of a particular product which will fulfil that need.

Please note emphasis on user needs. Why is this? We have to interpret what our users need, not impose upon them what we think they need. Our expertise lies in establishing our public or markets and in our ability to assess their needs, not prescribe them. Having identified the needs we have to provide for them.

For unexpressed needs, we have to create the environment in which they may be expressed and identified. Somewhere there is a mean between the public's immediate expressed need and what they would appreciate if only they were aware that it is available.

When we talk about providing for those needs we also mean it against a background of the resources available to us in term of staff, money, time and materials. Therefore we have to know our users. The advantage of this user-oriented approach is that we can promote specific services to specific groups: direct our product more effectively and efficiently and more cost-beneficially to the most receptive audience.

Ask participants "How can we establish user needs?" Give them a few minutes to discuss this at their tables and then the spokesperson can respond. The scribe can write down suggested points to avoid duplication.

Library surveys/questionnaires can be valuable and informative, but they can also be expensive. Focus groups are an opportunity to collect people's views. Other tools include reports of various kinds, knowledge of the organisation (its purpose, values, structure, and competitors) or knowledge of the community through newspapers and community activities.

The role of the individual librarian

We talked about each member of the library being part of the marketing force. With the right attitude and communication skills the responsive individual librarian can discover a great deal about user needs by simply asking the right questions. Librarians can ask their contacts whether they use the library – and if not, why not? In the library the librarian can talk purposefully to the users, rather than just chat. A great deal of very useful information can be gathered by skilful questioning and directed conversation. Did they find what they were looking for? Are notes made of information requested but not available? Why do borrowers come to the library? By keeping a high profile in the individual community (whether public, academic or departmental) and being aware of current trends, research and issues the librarian can serve as a very active receptor of information vital to the correct provision of what that community needs.

Obviously in any library planning information is gathered from many sources but, if we are really user-oriented, more attention should be paid to our users who should be encouraged to contribute views, opinions, ideas, suggestions, complaints, and enquiries. Only by learning about their needs, perceptions, and preferences can we in any way determine what information products and services we can provide. If librarians are really tuned in, the products and services

offered by the library will reflect the actual needs and not what the librarian imagines.

Librarians should be aware that while questions are directed towards information or reading needs, librarians should be sensitive to other personal needs that are being indicated. By fulfilling additional needs, we can compete more successfully with other attractions.

Public librarians may find *Transparency 6*, Knowing your community, and *Transparency 7*, Knowing your library users and non-users, useful.

Organisational responsibility

All marketing needs a strong support system. Channels and mechanisms should be created for the collection of data on the community and markets. Data needs to reach the people responsible for the overall planning not only of the library service but its overall marketing strategy and particularly those responsible for material selection. And there needs to be a minimum of distortion along the way! Whoever is in charge must be committed to the marketing approach so that data received from staff at the frontline is given the consideration it deserves.

Another red flag! Always remember the resources and capabilities of the organisation and be very clear what the library's core business is. The very worst thing in marketing is making a promise and then not delivering either because of lack of resources or quite frankly because it is not really the library's business.

The marketing mix

For practical purposes marketing uses the concept of the Marketing Mix (show *Transparency 5*). This is also known as the 4Ps: Product, Price, Place and Promotion to which we can add a few more Ps including as we have said already Personality. We have already talked at length about product – essentially what product we are selling and to whom but there is one component without which our marketing strategy is destined to fail. And that is:

Product knowledge

In discussing the qualities of the good salesperson product knowledge ranked high on the list. No amount of marketing or promotion technique is going to remove from the individual librarian the deliberate effort of knowing his or her own stock or resources. And to a large extent this means reading and reading and reading widely whether the reading be professional journals, newspapers, fiction or non-fiction.

Products have life cycles: in some cases the material is out of date or the need for it has passed. We need to be in contact with the producers of our products, and we will touch on that again in the later sessions.

Price

How can we talk about price especially in relationship to libraries which are usually non-profit organisations? Philip Kotler develops the concept of marketing in relation to non-profit organisations like libraries, hospitals, and educational institutions. Marketing today is not just exchanging goods for money. Essentially “exchange” is the central concept.

Following Kotler we must be very clear about what we offering to our users in exchange for what. We must be sure that the rates of exchange, as it were, are known by those who need to know. Payment is not always affected in monetary terms. *Ask participants* the following:

- What is the price that users of an apparently free service “pay” for this service?
- What do you think place refers to in this context?
- What do you think packaging refers to?
- What types of promotion do you know?

Again the participants can work in groups at their tables. Ask the scribe to write down the points under the different headings. Alternatively a representative from each group can write on the flipchart the group's responses to one of the questions.

How do users of what is free at the point of access actually “pay”?

- Through the time and energy they have to spend getting to it
- By adjusting to the hours of opening (not always convenient)
- Through the emotional energy required to deal with staff who may not all be helpful, and with frustration in not finding what they want

- Through overcoming bureaucracy to register
- Through overcoming bureaucracy to borrow

In addition to the price we also have to think of the competition. This can be other sources of information (what are they?) It can also be other demands on the user's time. For the public library it can be other leisure and social activities such as bookshops, videos, television, and sport.

Place

Place refers here to the efficient distribution of our products: the location and number of our libraries and the speed and efficiency with which the users receive what they need. In other words how locatable, identifiable, deliverable is the information required in relationship to the acceptable time and effort expended?

Packaging

Besides adding another P to the marketing mix, packaging can be the appearance of the library and the appearance and format of the information. Packaging is simply marketing terminology for user-friendliness.

Promotion

To recap, marketing is the entire activity of determining the user's information needs, establishing which product or services your user believes will fulfil these needs, packaging and distributing them for easy availability and finally promoting them.

Having identified your product, established the services you can offer at attractive terms in a convenient way, how do we make those services and their benefits known? How do we promote them and stimulate interest and support? We do this through practising different methods or techniques or activities, namely Public Relations, Branding, Advertising, Publicity and Advocacy. We need to look briefly at their differences in approach

Public Relations will be dealt with specifically later but for now PR is the image of the organisation. A favourable image is important to any organisation and few people dispute that the public library is a good thing. But how many actually use it? We as promotion-conscious librarians need to communicate a message to our users and potential users that not only provokes a positive attitude but also a positive action.

Branding: a brand is an image with added value. It contains all the elements, giving the product something more. It communicates personality. Consistency in branding is necessary for easy recognition. Branding is about more than just the logo.

Advertising and publicity direct individual users to the specific products that meet their needs. The object of publicity is to make something known through different media or actions and successful publicity must be based on works that the public defines as good and motives that the public accepts as honest. It is making the good known.

Advertising is a form of publicity or making known through various media. The space or time has to be paid for, obviously. The object is to create awareness of, interest in and desire to possess or use the product or service.

Advocacy (or more familiarly lobbying) is a recent form of promotion. It means pleading for a cause or more specifically pleading for more money. Advocacy is easier if you have other stakeholders on your side, for example library committees or Friends groups. But you must know exactly what you are doing.

You need to co-ordinate all promotional elements available to develop an effective programme as each of these activities has a different focus. The opportunities for individual librarians to actively promote are endless. We only hope to stimulate an awareness of what you yourselves can do. Librarians who know their stock and who communicate easily have in practically every human contact an opportunity to promote not only the library but also a specific resource. But it must be emphasised: do not be overwhelmed by the options open to you. We will discuss later methods and techniques, in particular in the PR session. Each of you can go away with something that suits your personality and temperament in promoting the library.

Finally add passion to the marketing mix

What is a successful library marketer? The individual librarian, with the right kind of personal qualities, sensitive to the needs of the users, knowledgeable about the product, providing it at an acceptable rate of exchange, in the most appropriate way – and above all promoting it with passion.

Librarians in special libraries may find *Transparency 8*, Marketing library services to management, useful.

Public relations

Public Relations is an integral part of marketing but it is also a profession with its own body of knowledge, experience and expertise. Here we simply want to create an awareness of Public Relations or PR as it commonly referred to and how it can be used in libraries.

Ask participants “What do you understand by Public Relations?” They should respond individually without much time given for any thought. The scribe should write up the ideas expressed. These can be referred to throughout the session where applicable.

What is Public Relations?

There are many definitions of Public Relations but one of the simplest is that of the Public Relations Institute of South Africa: “a planned, deliberate and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics”. Even more simply put, PR is the climate in which any organisation operates (that is in which it markets its product) and the attitudes that various people have towards it (and thus towards its product).

It must be emphasised that the basis of good PR is always good service or product. But good service or a good product is not enough. The public need to know the product or service to support it. The more support it receives the better the product or service can be. The better the product or service, the greater the support. Good service and good PR are totally dependent on each other.

If PR is essentially the attitude people have towards an organisation, how do we find out what these attitudes are? What do they really think of an organisation? What is its reputation? Reputation is the collected impressions gathered through experience and knowledge by the people with whom the organisation comes into contact. Again we apply many of the techniques that are used in marketing to find out user needs. For example, in order to find out what people think one can use scientific methods such as attitudinal surveys or questionnaires. These can be time consuming, expensive and difficult. But there are simpler ways which individuals can use to find out what people think of their organisation from a PR perspective:

Reflective thinking: what are you doing and why? What do you know about the organisation? And what do you yourself think about it? Is this opinion shared?

Questioning: ask people what they think but make sure you ask the right questions in the right way of individuals and groups. You can do this formally or informally. Focus groups can be used.

Listening to what people say: listening is a skill. Use your energy in listening rather than appearing to listen or concentrating on your answer. What are people actually trying to say? Concentrate on ideas being expressed rather than facts. Do not lose concentration when listening becomes difficult–technical, for example. Ignore mannerisms, dress or behaviour that is off-putting or irritating.

Observing: this is more than just looking. Try seeing your organisation or services from other perspectives.

Studying: examine available data such as press cuttings, articles, files, and letters received. Pay attention to both compliments and complaints

As we have said PR is essentially the attitude people have towards an organisation. If it is positive it needs to be reinforced. If it is neutral it needs to be changed to positive. If hostile it must be changed to favourable in order to obtain the public’s understanding and acceptance.

How does one change people’s attitudes? One tries essentially through communication of one kind or another.

The role of communication in Public Relations

- Ask the participants: “What do you understand by communication.”
- Get brief and spontaneous answers.

The scribe can write up the responses which could then be incorporated into the explanation below.

Communication will only be discussed briefly as it is a whole science in itself. It can be considered as an attempt to acquire meaning; as the transfer of information; the process of informing or interaction between people through messages. Communication occurs between individuals or between groups.

Because communication is made up of many parts and stages it is more correct to talk of the communication process. And processes by their very nature are not static. Communication is occurring all the time. Non-communication—either verbal or non-verbal—is not an option. Even if alone one communicates with oneself. This communication is effected through signs and symbols, subjects in themselves the recipients of a whole field of study called semiotics.

So PR is essentially planned communication, that is communication directed at a specific public with a specific purpose in mind.

Process of communication

Communication is made up of five basic elements which, although static here for the purpose of description, are essentially dynamic and ongoing. These five elements can be described in a number of different ways or models but the following model is preferred:

- The communicator who wishes to send the message.
- The message itself.
- The medium through which the message is physically conveyed.
- The destination: the individual or group for whom the message is intended.
- The feedback or reaction by which one knows whether the message was successfully received and understood.

The communicator

The communicator is whoever initiates the process and on whom in PR the responsibility for successful communication lies. This may be an organisation, a group or an individual. Communicators in a library may be the organisation itself with different publics; management informing staff or individuals interacting with colleagues.

The message

The message is the content or information that needs to be conveyed. What are we trying to say and why? The thinking and planning behind any communication effort must be translated into a form that is understandable to the destination. The message must be encoded into symbols or signs, for example words or pictograms or graphics that the destination for whom the message is intended will understand.

Messages, no matter their form or how they are transmitted, must use symbols to which similar meanings can be assigned by both the communicator and the destination. Otherwise they are meaningless. The assigning of meaning is in itself another study but, put simply, it means that if you are writing or talking you use the vocabulary or sentence construction that is appropriate for your audience.

The medium

The medium is the means by which the encoded message is physically conveyed.

The destination

The destination is the public for whom the message is intended. To whom are you directing the message? Most important of all, will the destination not only physically receive the message but will it also be able to decode it correctly? Will it be able to interpret the meaning that you intended (note destination and not receiver is used as they are not necessarily the same).

Feedback

Feedback is the response that tells you whether the message was successful or not. This is more

difficult to pinpoint with organisations than with individuals. Feedback in itself is not necessarily the degree of success. Even lack of response is a type of feedback. It may mean the message has not got through and has to be reformulated or directed differently. The only true criterion of whether the message has been successfully received and decoded is whether the response is the required one. Has the destination's attitude been successfully changed as evidenced in his/her/their behaviour towards the organisation, services or products?

Dolny (p.205) provides a useful checklist for effective communication:

- Contact has to be made at cognitive, emotional and will power levels.
- Comprehension and understanding the message brings clarity and safety.
- Acceptance of the message is to be effected.
- Internalisation of the contents is a way towards action on the message.
- Acting upon the message (in the required way) is the climax of the communication.

Publicity in Public Relations

We have discussed publicity or making known earlier in the context of marketing. Publicity is also part of the whole PR ethos of the library and its role must always be seen in the larger framework of the whole PR communication process. Although publicity is not a cure-all, effective communication through successful publicity can bring results. It should not be used as a substitute for good service or the necessary corrective action. It only serves to focus attention on good work. By itself it will not do anything for a library—this takes a good service, a good cause and a hardworking organisation. It merely provides a voice to convey ideas to the public.

When considering publicity one should bear in mind:

- Too much publicity (saturation) can in fact be counter-productive. It is the content and how much it has been absorbed, not the amount of publicity, that eventually impacts upon public opinion.
- Publicity disseminated is not equivalent to message received or understood.
- Publicity inevitably reflects the character of the organisation it is publicising.
- Not all publicity an organisation receives originates from within its control.
- Finally not all public relations activities result in publicity nor should all activities be so designed.

Taking into account our understanding of the role of communication in establishing attitudes towards an organisation, how do we set about a planned, deliberate and sustained effort to establish a favourable climate?

By planning a PR programme, that is a planned series of activities designed to create the favourable climate, the good impressions and the positive image of the organisation.

The more positive the image of an organisation the more likely is it to receive support for its products or services.

First you need to know your library objectives and policies. What is your library hoping to achieve and what services is it going to provide for whom? How is it going to provide these and in what range and depth? One of healthiest benefits of planning a PR programme is that it involves a thorough examination and rethink of what you are trying to do and for whom. You cannot be accused of giving a bad service if you have made it clear that it is not your function to provide that service.

Public Relations publics

PR programs are never directed at the public overall. They are always directed at specific groups or 'publics'. A "public" is a group of people bound together by a common interest, organisation, profession, age, or proximity. A "market" is a public to whom you want to direct a specific product. Stakeholders are individuals or groups with a stake in the organisation, that is they stand to benefit directly or indirectly.

Ask participants: "Who do you think are the library's publics?" The participants should discuss this in their groups and a spokesperson for each table should respond. The scribe should write up the responses to avoid duplication of ideas.

- *Internal publics:* staff grouped by rank, qualification, function, geographical location. (Note that internal PR is integrally linked with good staff relations).

- *External publics*: the governing body whether corporate, institutional, local, provincial or central government, and the various levels and officials within it.
- *Other publics* include other libraries, library schools, associations, booksellers, publishers, writers, suppliers of all kinds, other information professionals, and different types of library users.

It is necessary to have different types of programmes in operation at the same time.

Formula for establishing a PR programme

- *Analyse the situation* (it may not necessarily be a problem). This could be done by asking a number of pertinent questions of a particular public. Why are they important to us? What do we think they think of us? What would we like them to think of us? What do they really think of us? What are we doing now? Do we need to change, and if so how?
- *Design and develop the programme*. What strategies and actions and media are you going to use and how? Involve your staff or your colleagues because you are going to need them for the next step.
- *Implement the programme*. Remember no programme can exceed the resources available to carry it out.
- *Evaluate* the effectiveness of the programme. Simply put: did the programme achieve its intended results? If not, why not? Were there unintended results?
- *Revise the programme*. What did you learn? What are you going to do about it?

Remember PR is an ongoing process.

Recent developments in Public Relations

Service organisations have become increasingly aware with limited resources that they cannot go it alone. The concept of partnerships is being realised more and more and public/private partnerships are increasing. Besides having a monetary or tangible benefit for both or all the partners it forms part of the Social Investment or Social Responsibility arm of an organisation as is sponsorship which takes us into the realm of grant or proposal writing. This is another developing discipline in its own right.

Ask participants: Please list all the media of communication that you know. Classify them, that is, group like with like.

Assign a reasonable length of time for this group exercise. A spokesperson from each group will come up to write down what each group offers. If there are a number of flipcharts they can work simultaneously. Use *Transparency 10* as a checklist:

Media of communication

Internal

- Personal contact: direct oral communication—feedback potentially the greatest, especially when face-to-face.
- Personal contact: direct written communication—memos, letters, notes, email.
- Meetings
- Notice board
- Newsletters/house magazines (These should be two way, professional, regular, informative and entertaining).
- Group email/circulars
- Annual report
- Handouts/guides for new staff

External

Oral

- Person to person—either individual (but remember limited time/availability) or group (remember concept of “publics”).
- Visits/Tours—when requested or by invitation.

Print media/DTP

- Publications such as:

General guides/handouts on specific topics

Booklists/bibliographies
Newsletters
Annual reports

Remember the importance of distribution!

Mass media

- Press releases, articles, interviews (not necessarily an insider) for use in/on:
 - Newspapers
 - Journals/house magazines
 - Radio & TV
 - Film & video
 - Internet-websites

Special events/Public Relations techniques

- Official openings, exhibitions and displays (permanent and mobile), events
- Outreach activities
- Friends of the library
- Give-aways—generate goodwill rather than attract new users

The performing and visual arts

- Provide creative artists with a forum to express themselves, exhibit or perform. This creates another medium of communication.

Folk media or oramedia

Folk or oramedia is of particular significance to rural Africa where not all the population is necessarily literate. Some areas will have a range of ethnic groups with different languages. Access to the mass media may well be limited. According to Lubbe and Puth (p.155) “Oramedia (also called folk or traditional media) are based on indigenous culture produced and consumed by members of a group. These media have visible cultural features, often quite conventional, by which social relationships and a worldview are maintained and defined. They take many forms and are rich in symbolism. Oramedia must be seen as interpersonal media speaking to common people in their language, in their idiom and dealing with problems of direct relevance to their situation.”

Among these media are puppet shows, village theatre, improvisation theatre, feeding into the grapevine, oratory, poetry and music. All make use of places where people gather such as the market place, church or sports occasions.

Non-verbal communication

Discuss with the aid of *Transparency II*:

Non-verbal communication

- Staff: dress standards/badges/uniforms
- Body language: attitude/expression/posture/movements
- Library buildings:condition of building, tidiness, surroundings
- Furniture
- Equipment
- Condition of stock/neatness/order
- Notice boards/signs
- Vehicles

Responsibility

Whose responsibility is Public Relations, that is the image building of the library?

Ultimately the interaction between the librarian and user creates the users’ perception of the library (even if they do not receive what they want). The staff member takes charge of the interaction by physical appearance/demeanour/environment.

Task critique

At the end of the session those present should discuss the task that they were set prior to the workshop. Do this in terms of the communication process and the media of communication.

Library services to children

This session will examine why children need libraries, and consider in detail to whom these services need to be marketed and how, applying in practice the concepts behind marketing and public relations already discussed.

The primary market

The primary market is comprised of children from birth to 12 to 14 years. For library purposes this range is usually divided up into Birth to toddlers, Pre-school, Primary school, and possibly the lowest grades of Secondary school. For marketing purposes however we shall be talking about children as a group across the range. Implicit in library services to children are the benefits of books and reading. We need to translate those benefits into marketing terminology.

Ask participants: "What is the product we are offering? Many of you are not children's librarians but you may be parents or aunts or uncles or even teachers of one kind or another so, as we shall show, services to children impact on all of you. Please discuss at your tables what you think are the products that library services to children offer." Each table offers what it considers the benefits with the scribe or group representative, writing them up on a flipchart or whiteboard to avoid duplication. Use Transparency 12 as a checklist:

The benefits of reading for children (the Product)

- Reading is a basic skill that impacts on a child's development.
- It increases technical ability (reading competency).
- It develops language skills—vocabulary heard in conversation is reinforced when read in books.
- Rereading helps children internalise new vocabulary and language structures.
- Reading improves comprehension and communication skills.
- The print medium lets the reader return to sections not understood, thus allowing complex arguments to be presented.
- Reading stimulates imagination and curiosity.
- It provides information, complementing what is learnt at school. It is a resource for teachers.
- It provides for children's emotional needs in terms of an escape from reality. It provides resources to cope with problems by providing solutions and the opportunity to learn about similar experiences.
- It reinforces the child's own language, culture and environment.
- It broadens children's horizons by exposing them to other experiences, opinions, cultures, and peoples.
- It encourages the independent thinking required by democratic societies.

The benefits of reading for children will apply to a large extent to young adults, adult learners and almost everybody in fact. It is our major product with a number of by-products as we have previously discovered.

Packaging

How is this product packaged for our primary market? For convenience and ease of retrieval books in a children's library are usually organised into different categories such as:

- Picture books—with or without text
- Fiction for different ages
- Non-fiction for different interests with different levels of complexity

But to reduce it to simply the above is like selling something in a brown paper bag. We need to examine the product and the packaging far more carefully, that is enhance our product knowledge.

According to Pienaar, the most important thing to remember is that because childhood is so short, children's reading is much more important than it is at any other time of life. Children are impressionable. Childhood is the time of lasting impressions which directly influence the future adult. Children absorb much without realising it and we cannot underestimate the importance of books and reading. And because childhood is so short children have less than ten years to read children's books—years during which their reading is further restricted by the development of their understanding and mechanical reading ability. This means less than ten years in which to read books that form the foundation of their future reading habits, literary tastes and aesthetic appreciation. It is for this reason that we have to choose the best books for children. There is no time for the shoddy and mediocre.

In brief a good children's book will be written from a child's perspective, will be well written with careful use of language and sound values. While books can expose children to other cultures and peoples, children need every motivation to read. Particularly in countries with a less developed reading culture, it is necessary to have books that affirm the children's language, culture and environment. What is an authentic African children's book? Essentially a book that is sincere, treats the reader with respect and reflects the feel, sound, smell and sights of Africa. A good children's book can be read by both children and adults anywhere.

A good children's book will also be well produced, with due attention paid to the quality of paper, the suitability of the typeface, the standard of the illustrations and their appropriateness to the text. We do not have the time to examine what makes a good picture book but we have mentioned that illustrations make the book more attractive, appealing and, because the illustrations can make the text more accessible they can motivate poor readers to persevere.

Having considered product and packaging we turn to "Place".

Place

Where are books distributed, where are they available, where are they accessible?

- The home
- The library
- The school
- The bookshop
- Other venues

The presenter may find that this is an appropriate place in the session to discuss the current situation of children's books in the country. What already exists in terms of the local production of children's books, the training and availability of children's librarians and children's libraries whether public or school. It is unlikely that the situation will be satisfactory so the participants can now go into the practical steps of proactively marketing children's services.

Marketing and promotion

To whom do we now market our product (the benefits of books and reading)? What is the price readers have to pay?

What is required from children is their time and application and making choices in regard to competition from other attractions. (The presenter can establish by quick individual answers what the specific competition is in the particular country).

But here we change the focus of the marketing exercise from the beneficiaries as it were to the providers on whom the children are dependent as they are for food, clothing and shelter and other stakeholders.

Ask participants: "Who are the providers and stakeholders of library services for children and what do they have to 'pay'?" Participants can answer individually or discuss in groups with a representative or scribe writing the answers on the flipchart to avoid duplication.

The following are some suggested responses:

- Parents and close relatives have to devote time, patience and attention to develop the habit of reading to their children. This shared activity makes reading a valued and rewarding occupation to both parent and child. It inculcates a positive attitude to reading as books are introduced to them in a warm, caring environment. Children develop a reading habit and

learn that reading can be fun. They also learn how to hold a book, turn the pages, interpret pictures and follow text as well as learning to sit still and concentrate.

- A number of you who are inveterate readers may have experienced being told to go out to play when you are reading. Perhaps you were asked why you were wasting your time with your nose in a book? Parents have to develop tolerance for their children's reading habits by being convinced that reading is a beneficial activity, that reading is not necessarily anti-social, and that reading can be of immense psychological and emotional support to a child growing up.
- If the parents are not literate they can look at the pictures and make up the stories.

This is a good place to introduce the benefits of story telling—helping children to concentrate. And more important besides academic achievement—stories can convey the culture. Folktales, for example, can help prepare children deal with events they may encounter in their lives and can try out different ways of dealing with issues. (Refer to Bruno Bettelheim and the importance of fairy tales if you are familiar with his work).

Librarians whether community, public or teacher-librarians

The price librarians have to pay is to understand the benefits of books and reading and more importantly know the books themselves. Here they may play a number of roles: as parents themselves and as ratepayers and taxpayers. Books are a wonderful educational resource but teachers should still make sure that they are fun. We do not want to lose the reader once the child has left school.

Which brings us to the various authorities (translated as the people who have the power and therefore the resources). Library and education authorities—local, provincial and national government—all have to be persuaded that providing money for services to children is in everybody's best interests.

Who are the other stakeholders? Simply put, who can help to develop a reading culture and who can benefit? We have to remember that development does not occur sequentially. Nothing exists in a vacuum which means that whatever happens in one area impacts on another. Writers and illustrators need publishers and publishers need booksellers and booksellers need buyers both individuals and libraries.

Reality indicates that whilst publishers, booksellers and writers on the whole understand the importance of books for children, their idealism is tempered by money.

So how do we persuade everybody to part with their money?

Promotion

Ask participants "How do we promote library services to and for children?"

Each of the tables should first of all consider the specific markets or stakeholders or publics to be addressed (as identified above) and suggest realistic and practical methods to reach them with an emphasis on the unique selling point to be directed at them specifically. We need different mechanisms which are appropriate to stakeholder and occasion and time.

Again ask scribe to write up the points as each table makes its contribution (always start at a different table to give everybody a chance), or a representative from each table can come to write up the responses. This is more time consuming.

Compare the ideas elicited from the participants with the checklist on *Transparency 13*.

Reaching out to the children themselves

Knowledge of the appropriate book for the specific child is required, as are attractive surroundings and an enthusiasm and passion for reading as fun. If no books are available, try public storytelling in shopping centres, parks and other public venues.

Reaching out to librarians

Form Children's Books Interest groups. These will act as an educational tool, a stimulus and provide a critical mass for political lobbying. (What kind of letter will you write to get prospective members involved?)

Reaching out to parents

- Play on parents wanting the best for their children. Call meetings of parents directly.
- Set up joint programmes with other agencies serving families such as clinics.
- Workshops on parenting and Resource centres for parents are other possibilities.
- Family literacy sessions
- Lapsit programmes–telling stories so that parents can themselves learn how to stimulate their children
- Grandparents (who themselves may not be able to read) can provide the benefits of story telling by talking about their lives.

Reaching out to teachers

- Emphasise benefits of complementing educational programmes.
- Meetings–individual and collective with teachers and head teachers.
- Partnerships with teachers–again issue of critical mass.
- Liaison with school projects.
- Help teachers organise their own learning resources–filing their newspaper clippings, pamphlets, posters.

Reaching out to authorities–political lobbying

This needs to be systematic and sustained. Emphasise social and economic benefits to community and country in terms of:

- Short term benefits–improve parent child/relationships and family stability.
- Medium term benefits–social and educational and emotional development of the children.
- Long term benefits–reading culture, informed adults, the culmination of all earlier marketing and benefits.

Individual personal approaches to people in authority: who do you know in decision-making positions? Lobby group approaches–appointments /agendas/ knowing what you want to achieve.

Reaching out to suppliers such as writers/illustrators, publishers and booksellers.

Prizes and awards may encourage authors to write for children. “Writing for children is like writing for adults–only better” (Maxim Gorky).

- *Publishers*–offer a market, indicate standards and help with content and translations.
- *Booksellers*–offer a market.

NGOs and donors

NGO support – approach NGOs with proposals, which involves a knowledge of grant writing. Linked to proposals and grant applications are business plans.

Donors can be from the world of Business (Corporate Social Responsibility), or foundations and trusts. What can we offer them in exchange for their support? Some countries offer tax incentives to donors.

Reading culture

During the session the presenter may be able to start a discussion on the concept of a Reading culture by asking:

- What is a Reading culture?
- What are the signs of a Reading culture?

Library services to young adults

This session will be in the form of a *marketing exercise*: applying the marketing framework to marketing library services to young adults.

Ask participants: “What set of questions would you prepare in order to develop a marketing strategy. Remember successful marketing is based on knowing the users, their characteristics and needs and what product you can provide that will fulfil those needs. Spend a few minutes writing them down and we shall see how they compare with the proposed structure.”

Show *Transparency 14*, Library services to young adults

- Who are our users or potential users—our primary market?
- What are their characteristics?
- What are their needs, and how do we find them out?
- What can the library provide?
- What are we actually providing?
- Who are the other stakeholders?
- How do we market library services to them? (exchange relationship)
- With whom can we establish partnerships?
- What do we actually promote? What methods do we use?

Ask participants: “Again are there any other questions we should ask that have been omitted?”

The participants should do this exercise in their groups for thirty minutes, making points and trying to keep to this structure for ease of discussion. Emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers. The idea is to generate as many ideas as possible. Their usefulness can be evaluated in the discussion.

Each table can have the opportunity to present a response (either orally or on flipcharts) to a set of questions with comment from the other tables. This is an opportunity for participants to share experiences.

The scribe should note down points if the responses are presented orally. The presenter can use the following content to add to whatever arises in the reports.

Who are our users?

What do we understand by young adults? What is their age range? What are their characteristics?

Like older people youth is not a homogenous group. Each young adult is an individual with differing interests, tastes and personalities. We cannot compartmentalise or generalise. Although they may be between the ages of 12-20 they will be at different stages of physical, social, mental and emotional development so that what they respond to differs and their needs are different. However they do share common features and common needs, namely:

- Physically they are changing. These body changes can be frightening if they are ignorant and do not understand what is happening to them.
- Mentally they are developing. They are questioning life and its meaning, all of which can be confusing and unsettling.
- Socially they are developing an increased awareness of their surroundings (when they can actually look outside themselves—self absorption is a very strong characteristic) and their relationship to other people. They are becoming aware of the fallibility of their parents and at least questioning those in authority if not rebelling outright. Acceptance by their peers is paramount.

- Emotionally they are on a roller coaster of emotions – rawer and newer feelings, sensitivities they are reluctant to admit to, insecure, anxious, moody and alienated.

How do we find out what they need?

- Speak to them either individually or in focus groups
- Read the literature
- Read books that they find popular and analyse why
- How else?

What can the library provide?

In exchange for their patronage, usage and support, what can the library provide? As a concept the library is:

- Neutral
- Relatively safe
- Free, open and accessible
- Usually well lit and comfortable

The library can be a congenial environment to meet friends.

In response to their needs for information, reassurance, acceptance the library can offer them library material of particular relevance such as:

- Certain types of *imaginative literature* like plays, poetry dealing with relationships and feelings.
- *Non-fiction books* on issues of relevance to them—again relationships, health, careers.
- *Biographies*. These are hugely underestimated as a resource for young people. They often provide role models, examples of courage over adversity, of relationships both within and without the family, as well as offering interesting career ideas and glimpses of alternate lifestyles—not necessarily radical!
- *Fiction* – and here I refer to what is popularly called “young adult fiction”. I have very strong opinions on this as I do not believe that fiction should be written down for young adults. I do not believe that the problem should be the central issue in young adult literature. For a factual treatment go to the non-fiction coverage at the right level of treatment – specially true of mechanical descriptions of sex. I believe that young adult literature besides being able to portray a situation, describe a relationship or having a particular kind of problem as a theme must also have literary value, that is must be well written with adequate characterisation and credible within the bounds of that genre. I believe that the right kind of adult novel can do more for the young adult reader than a badly written so-called problem book. The facile, badly written book diminishes the emotion, reduces the quality of the experience and instead of giving it depth and the situation roundness, fullness and meaning, merely impoverishes it, wasting the reader’s time and leaving him or her the poorer.
- *Magazines* – colourful, illustrated, short, contemporary, indigenous languages, connected to films and TV.

All this is of course against the implicit belief that we have discussed before about the importance of literacy and reading from a technical, intellectual, emotional, social and cultural perspective. But we dare not claim support for services to youth solely on the basis of benefit to individuals and their self-realisation. We must also tie it to economic gain and social safety with implications for the whole of society. School and public libraries and librarians when adequately equipped can be a powerful catalyst in a young person’s life, offering attention, encouragement, ideas, hope and knowledge that can help direct or even redirect a life.

We also have to consider the Internet as a source of information. But do all young adults have access? The Internet is an addendum to books and reading – not a replacement.

What are you currently offering the youth?

Remember not only product but also price, place, packaging, promoting and personality. What is the competition?

The presenter may find this is an opportunity to discuss the current situation leading on to action, namely – what action you can take.

What action can you take?

Identify stakeholders

- Parents/relatives
- Teachers
- Ministers
- Youth leaders
- Youth NGOs
- Authorities – political at all levels, education, health (idle, bored and alienated youth are a public danger)
- Who else?
- Identify prospective providers and partners

Back to marketing

We know what our product is. How do we market it not only to the youth themselves but also to donors, funders and other stakeholders for their support. (Remember the exchange relationship.)

How do we promote and how do we mobilize support?

A major asset is librarians who enjoy working with youth, who can develop a rapport with them and who understand their needs, and who are familiar with relevant material, referrals and resources. Librarians and other library staff can provide models of positive personality characteristics and respect for people and information. Their genuine interest can and will inspire and motivate the young people they serve. As individuals they can achieve a great deal but again librarians cannot go it alone. Partnerships are needed to work with youth and also to provide a critical mass for lobbying.

- Form a support group for librarians working with young people or who are particularly interested in working with them.
- Collaborate with other agencies, parent/family education and support groups focused on particular areas of concern such as sex, drugs, drinking, depression.
- Initiate resource centres–health information, computer training, careers.
- Work with other youth and family agencies such as the local health department, parks and recreation, and the police in promoting the library and its resources.

Libraries and HIV/AIDS

The presenter can decide whether to use the following section or not.

Ask participants: If you came into a library as an evaluator investigating how “AIDS-PROACTIVE” the library was, what would you look for? This can be a general discussion with participants responding individually either to the question or to points made by other participants.

Is it sufficient to:

- Help advertise various types of information on posters?
- Distribute material on various aspects?
- Keep material on various aspects at different levels.
- Provide a venue for HIV/AIDS based meetings of various kinds, for example People living with AIDS (PWAs), support groups, and so on?
- Act as a referral agency?

What are the types of specific information?

- Policies in different areas at different levels
- Statistics and demographics and predictions
- Economic, social, cultural, educational and general planning impact
- Medical facts—what is HIV/AIDS?
- Methods of transmission
- Managing HIV/AIDS—medicines and life style
- PWAs—health care workers and support groups
- Preventing the spread—education and safe practices
- Cultural practices, myths and condoms

Who are the other stakeholders?

- With whom can the library establish partnerships particularly relating to Youth?
- What can the library do to actually change people’s behaviour in terms of overcoming prejudice and encouraging behaviour/practices that prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS?

Library services to people with physical disabilities

This session lends itself to general discussion amongst the participants because it deals essentially with practical issues to which they can contribute from their own experience. However the presenter should use the framework of questions provided to ensure that the necessary ground is covered in a more or less systematic fashion or for the purpose of summing up afterwards.

Who are people with physical disabilities?

It is important to remember that although a person may have a physical disability there is nothing wrong with his/her mind or intellect. Somebody with a disability is no different from the average library user in the range and interests of his/her library needs whether they be for information of whatever kind or for study or recreational material. But from a physical point of view library users with physical disabilities have very specific needs.

Ask participants: “What do you think somebody with a physical disability needs to use the library? What inhibits him/her using the library?” The participants can answer individually.

- Mobility—getting to and from the library.
- Accessibility—getting in and around the library with provision for personal needs.
- Blind people need material in a form accessible to them, namely Braille and talking books.
- Deaf people need to be able to communicate their needs.
- What about disabled people who are also illiterate? They need mobility and access to Adult Basic Education and Training and the opportunities it makes available.

Mobility

Ask participants: “What does mobility mean to people with a physical disability?”

Getting to the library:

- Own transport (maybe modified)
- Transport of friends/families/organisations
- Public transport (some cities have specially adapted public transport)

If it is not possible for the disabled person to get to the library then the library should go to the user through:

- Friends and family taking books to the disabled person with help of librarian.
- Organised homebound service run by library with assistance of volunteers.
- Depots in homes for the disabled run by volunteers with assistance from libraries.

Culture of volunteerism

The presenter should allow some time here for a general discussion on volunteerism. Responses are likely to vary according to country and place.

Accessibility – architectural features (Legislation-Building regulations)

Ask participants: “What architectural features are needed to make a library accessible?” The participants can discuss this at their tables before responding. The scribe can write down the responses to avoid duplication.

- Sidewalk access
- If stairs, also a ramp
- Doors wide enough for wheelchairs
- Security systems—wide enough for wheelchair to pass through
- Aisles wide enough to go through comfortably
- Appropriate desk design
- Appropriate height of shelves and arrangement of material (does not only apply to disabled users)

- Lifts large enough to accommodate a wheelchair with buttons at appropriate height
- Appropriate toilet design—virtually a standard feature in public buildings
- Appropriate height of computer terminals

Library material for users with disabilities

Ask: “What kind of library material do people with disabilities require?” The participants can answer this question individually.

People with disabilities share certain features of other “health special interest groups”, particularly in the issues of specific information for him/herself and caregivers, referral services and public education (combating public ignorance and as a result public prejudice).

In addition to the material generally found in a public library disabled users need:

- Coping material—essentially how-to books for the disabled and their care-givers relating to their material, emotional, and psychological needs.
- Public (and self) education material—relating to public awareness and the emotional and psychological needs of the disabled user. Besides non-fiction, autobiographies, biographies and certain fiction titles can be invaluable.
- Referral sources—comprehensive lists of agencies, authorities, organisations,
- Individuals who can provide more than what the library can offer in the nature of specialised services.

Format is an issue for blind, partially sighted and non-literate people and these needs are served by:

- Large print books
- Books in Braille
- Talking books/audio-cassettes
- Radio
- Story tellers

Other services provided by libraries (not necessarily only for people with disabilities):

- Display boards for posters, public awareness, and notices of meetings.
- Library used as a venue for meetings of support groups and for public lectures.

Attitude of the library staff

Disabled library users are also people with feelings and are not intellectually impaired. Staff must be aware of feelings of disempowerment and lack of control over their lives and environment that the disabled may experience in some situations. There is a very fine line between being overly sensitive (patronising) and being unaware (insensitive). However disabled users do need more time and energy from the library staff member dealing with them. One often finds that certain staff members have a particular affinity for dealing with disabled users and this should be acknowledged. The role of guide dogs in the lives of some disabled must also be understood.

Who are the stakeholders? The library cannot go it alone

Ask participants: “In previous discussions we have learnt that libraries do not exist in a vacuum. Who has an interest in library services to people with disabilities and to whom and how should these services be marketed? What are the benefits users derive in exchange for their funding and support?” Let the participants discuss this at their tables first before a spokesperson for the table responds.

Ask the scribe to write the responses on the whiteboard/flipchart.

The stakeholders:

- The disabled themselves
- Their families and familial caregivers
- The professional caregivers
- The legislators
- The providers of services—librarians/local authorities/health and welfare authorities
- Equipment and library material suppliers
- Architects/builders
- Funders such as business firms, foundations and trusts
- Support groups/volunteers—churches/youth movements

- Local transport companies
- The public

Benefits of library services to people with physical disabilities (the Product)

The disabled themselves receive all the benefits of reading previously discussed such as information and exposure to the outside world in all its aspects. If they manage to get to the library, they also get important social contact.

The caregivers of all kinds – information to assist them to provide better care and to give them important psychological and emotional support. This is particularly necessary in the caring professions.

Legislators have a particular duty to provide for all their constituents and a reputation as a caring lawmaker has not harmed anybody at the polls.

Providers of services such as local authorities, libraries and health and welfare services particularly benefit by enabling people with disabilities to enter the mainstream of society and become contributing members instead of a burden.

Equipment and library material suppliers benefit from their support in terms of increased markets for their equipment such as large print or Braille books and reading aids.

Architects and builders have the opportunity to test their ingenuity and skills by providing access yet keeping costs within reasonable bounds.

Library services to people with disabilities is an appropriate vehicle for Corporate Social Investment on the part of transport companies, suppliers and others.

Library services to people with disabilities provides opportunities for community service to service organisations with a social agenda.

Promoting these benefits

The product will utilise the various skills and techniques exercised in promoting other library services. The emphasis here is on mutually beneficial partnerships and joint ventures and close working with other agencies.

The presenter can take the discussion further if there is time.

Employment of disabled people within the library

Finally the employment of people with disabilities in libraries is a whole area that needs to be discussed but requires another kind of forum, for example labour relations or employment equity (refer to appropriate legislation and organisational disability policies).

Library services to adult basic education

Library services to Adult Basic Education encompass literacy training.

Illiteracy

The presenter, it is suggested, displays mirror or Greek or Cyrillic writing on the display board.

Ask participants: “What do you feel when you are asked to read the document displayed? How do your feelings relate to illiteracy?” The scribe can write down the key issues that emerge from the general discussion.

We all know literacy as a technical competency in reading and writing in various degrees of proficiency. But literacy does not exist in a vacuum—it is only the first step in enabling the learner to develop further, informing every action, deed or need.

We need to focus on what having that competency implies. In a nutshell it means having personal control over one’s environment. In a reading and writing culture illiteracy is a condition of deprivation and disempowerment. It cuts off people from many forms of communication, depriving them socially, emotionally and materially. It makes them dependent on others for basic activities like writing and receiving letters, completing and understanding official forms, and reducing their self-esteem and sense of self worth because they cannot sign their names. It cuts them off from ideas and opinions and information of the most basic kind. Not being able to read limits people’s access to employment, economic improvement and economic independence. Besides the benefits to the individuals the benefits of literacy spill over into the fabric of society.

Most people agree therefore that Literacy is an excellent product and the cornerstone of adult basic education and training or ABET.

Understanding literacy is only the first step. What we have to remember is that although adults may not be able to read or write they are still people with feelings, competencies, capabilities, experience and intelligence. Whatever we provide, it is to everybody’s benefit to tap into those resources.

Ask participants: “What are libraries actually doing?”

Use the conventional role of the library as a checklist

- Provide a venue for literacy classes
- Act as a referral to agencies that provide literacy training
- Advertise agencies that provide training
- Provide teaching resources for literacy teacher
- Provide learning resources for learners

But is that sufficient? Can we do more? Do librarians need to be more actively involved? To quote from the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994), a key mission of the public library is ‘supporting and participating in literacy activities and programmes for all age groups and initiating such activities if necessary’.

Discussions with other librarians have elicited the feeling that the library is a mediator between the producers of library materials and the adult learners. As a mediator the library has to try to motivate the adult learner; establish why the material is not being used and convey this information to the producers and to engage in projects that would encourage adult learners. Librarians should remember that in addition to this encouragement, the strongest motivation for adult learners is necessity and the example, success and support of other learners

This proactive stance is an advance on the previous conservative view—but a word of warning. Whatever we do we must always bear in mind that any initiatives must come from the

community itself through a rigorous process of consultation by the librarian. The community must indicate what its needs are and here the skill of the librarian is two-fold:

- Not all a community's needs relate to literacy but to some other more basic need such as childcare or access to water. A learner once commented that he could not eat words. Very often the librarian is only the conduit through which these basic needs are transmitted to the agency that can help – the librarian can help the community source the appropriate agency. However in satisfying these needs, a need for literacy often arises. This again illustrates the fact that literacy does not exist in a void.
- The second skill that the librarian requires is to seek the appropriate partner or sponsor because for library based initiatives the librarian cannot go it alone. The community must be involved and the librarian must also seek partners that can help whether simply in support, time or actual provision for the filling of the need in terms of money or material or equipment.

Stakeholders

Ask: “Who are the stakeholders? What is the critical message to be conveyed to them? How do we spell out what the benefit (the product) is in creating a community with basic literacy skills?” This is an opportunity for general discussion as most participants will have strong feelings about this issue. The scribe should write down points to avoid duplication.

The message may be that ABET is a good thing (as economists say, “a merit good”), a benefit to an individual that spills over into the whole community. But the critical message is that “Reading is Power” and that all should be involved in creating an empowered nation. Most countries have some educational initiative to which this can be linked.

It may be worthwhile to repeat the benefits of reading and also to emphasise the economic, social, psychological, intellectual and material contribution of literacy to any nation.

How can we convince organisations and individuals that they have a responsibility? And how do we indicate how they can fulfil their responsibility and what do they get in exchange?

Ask participants: “What are the specific benefits to each of the following stakeholders?” Again, general discussion. The scribe should note points.

- The National Library
- Librarians
- Library associations
- Learners and their families
- Teachers
- Department of Education
- Politicians and other policy makers
- Employers – public service, corporate or private
- Literacy and ABET providers (NGOs)
- Publishers
- Writers
- Booksellers
- The media
- Social Welfare authorities (all levels)
- Economic development authorities (all levels)
- Local community, for example optometrists
- Volunteers with ABET skills

What other publics can be recruited who do not have a direct stake? Volunteer skilled artisans, for example?

Ask practitioners: “On a practical level, other than the conventional contribution of the library, what more can you do alone or with others?” Again, general discussion as ideas may be generated. The scribe should note ideas expressed.

Suggestions

- If you do not have a venue for classes can you use your network to find others?
- Librarians forming an interest group to motivate each other and to sustain the initiative, working closely with Friends of the Library.
- Library associations giving news of initiatives in their newsletters.
- Learners and their families becoming involved in family literacy initiatives, for example

writing their family histories. Inter-generational literacy is children helping parents and grandparents and parents and grandparents helping children. Use the family unit to support, develop and encourage each member's potential for reading and writing.

- Persuade teachers to volunteer their time.
- Persuade employers to give staff time off or to set up classes in the workplace.
- In addition to offering a list of agencies that can provide training, liaise with them actively to add clout to the request. Often NGOs need to generate their own income, that is they cannot give services for nothing.
- If the library does not have the resources to assist the teachers and the learners, make your own or get author and/or publisher co-operation.
- Get optometrists to provide eye testing for learners.
- Volunteers can offer their skills in showing how to complete forms, budget, write letters – tap into the resources of the community again depending on needs as expressed by the learners.

Volunteerism in Adult Basic Education

The issue of volunteerism has been discussed already.

Social responsibility or social investment

This is a very important component nowadays of corporate public relations and ABET is an excellent vehicle for carrying out this mandate.

Ask participants: “How can large corporations help?” Again general discussion, with the scribe noting points.

The business plan

An essential element of seeking partnerships or sponsorships or simply financial support is the Business Plan. Most organisations require one before handing over any money. A Business Plan is simply what you want to achieve, how you want to do it, what resources you currently have, what resources you need over what period of time and how you intend measuring what you have achieved. If you are appealing for financial assistance from a foundation or whatever, the art of writing a grant proposal comes into play

Those of you who are not in public libraries are wondering what this has to do with you. Everything! Those of you who work in the academic, government (at all levels of government) or in the corporate sphere all have staff who are deprived by virtue of not being able to read or write.

Ask: “What is your responsibility towards adult basic education and what can you do?”

Ask: “Would you like to share your own adult basic education or literacy initiatives?” (Unless covered in previous discussion).

General discussion, with scribe noting points.

Conclusion

“Significant learning takes place where the subject matter is perceived by the student as having relevance for his/[her] own purpose”

(Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn*, p.158)

Ask: “What was your significant learning?” Each participant should respond individually after they have had a few moments to think about it. They could write their thoughts down before replying – at this stage they should be able to articulate their opinions freely. The scribe as usual should be writing down the responses.

The presenter, depending on the time available, could ask the further additional questions – either all or only some. Again individual replies from the participants, with the scribe continuing to write.

- *Ask:* “In terms of your libraries, what have you learnt are your most important needs?”
- *Ask:* “What are the next small steps you will take?”
- *Ask:* “To what extent do you feel the goal, objectives, outputs and outcomes of the workshop have been achieved?”
- *Ask:* “To what extent do your expectations on registering for the workshop correlate with the above?”
- *Ask:* “Do you as a group want to make a statement?” (If so, it must be realistic and do-able).
- *Ask:* “If you were to run a similar workshop what would you do differently in terms of both content and process?”

Presenter’s summing up

The key to Proactive librarianship is will, commitment and passion. An individual librarian can do much: groups of librarians with similar interests and goals can do more. Library associations can provide the critical mass to take concerns to the highest level.

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