

MARKETING THE SMALL LIBRARY

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INTRODUCTION

Public libraries across the nation are short of qualified staff, resources and money because most of the public has very little understanding of what libraries are doing today or what they could do in the future. Librarians and trustees in libraries of all sizes will have to take major responsibility for changing the outdated perceptions of public libraries and winning support. Marketing and public relations are among the biggest unsolved problems of the library profession.

While the basic problems are the same, marketing and public relations tend to be very different in a small public library than in a large one. The small public library has very little money to spare for community analysis or for marketing campaigns. But in a small community, a library can take a very personal approach to reaching community leaders, library users, video consumers, audiobook consumers, parents of small children or any other targeted audience.

This publication is written for public libraries that serve populations of less than 8000. While it covers marketing techniques used by libraries, it starts with the essential preliminary steps of community study and library evaluation. It also has a very heavy emphasis on using human resources to help market the library.

A distinction needs to be drawn between marketing and public relations. Public relations involves making the library and its programs and services visible to the community. Marketing goes beyond that. Marketing is the process of getting the customers to place a high value on the services so they will want to consume and/or support them. Marketing involves defining a target audience and planning specific strategies to make them value specific library services.

Rural library directors are the most likely to say that they have neither time nor money for direct marketing to funding authorities and target audiences. Yet rural library directors are also the most likely to say that inadequate financial support is their biggest problem. Such a disconnect between cause and effect is much less likely in a small business, where a lack of marketing leads directly to a lack of profit and a speedy dissolution.

This publication makes two critically important points:

1. Effective marketing can be done on a shoestring and, in a small library, usually has to be.
2. In a small public library, marketing is an excellent use of library staff time and results in better library service.

MARKETING ADVANTAGES OF SMALL LIBRARIES

Directors of small libraries are often very aware that they don't have all the financial and human resources of a major urban library. The look of glossy brochures, professional newsletters and expert publicity can be intimidating. But urban libraries do not have all the advantages. Small communities have the friendly human intimacy of their small size and public library staff can learn to turn this to their advantage.

1. Small communities can be studied physically. A lot of information can be gathered simply by looking at the entire town. A librarian who joins in the life of the community will come to know community residents from all walks of life.
2. In small communities, the community leaders know each other and see each other regularly at well-established events. Many librarians come to know and be known by community leaders simply by taking it for granted that they are a community leader.
3. In small communities, it is easier to ask for assistance. A librarian who wants to work with local government, local organizations or local media can ask for a meeting. Naturally, there are rebuffs in communities of any size but a lot of business is conducted more informally in small towns.
4. A rural library usually has less media to utilize, but they are less dependent on the media. It is not difficult to move paper publicity, or electronic publicity, out into the community.

MARKETING DISADVANTAGES OF SMALL LIBRARIES

One major disadvantage of small libraries in regard to marketing is the disadvantage of an undeveloped field. Rural librarians do not have many opportunities to be trained in current marketing techniques. If they develop an interest in the topic and start to read, they will find that very little is written about marketing that is intended for small libraries.

However, if the dramatic growth of library marketing as a top priority continues, this will change. Some historical perspective reveals that the whole field of rural librarianship has won increased respect and received dramatically improved study in the past twenty years. The development of information technology has drastically changed the rural library field, allowing small libraries access to materials that would have been out of their reach only a few years ago.

The other great disadvantage of small libraries in library marketing is financial. Most small libraries have highly inadequate funds to spend on hours, staff, materials and electronic information access. To redirect slender funds and limited time to

marketing the library is very hard to do. It takes time and training to develop the longer view that:

1. Knowing the community very well leads to visibly better service;

and

2. Effective marketing of excellent library services leads to better library support.

Many rural library directors are indeed offering excellent service. But they haven't always given thoughtful study to where their existing and potential strengths are nor determined the best way to showcase these services to the community so that community residents will value them.

Marketing a library is very much a matter of the individual style of the library's staff and trustees. Those who care about the library will have to pick and choose the methods and projects that will succeed in presenting the library to the community. They should also remember that, in Kansas, regional system and state library staff are committed to helping them.

NOTES:

PART ONE

THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

Good library marketing does not start with selling the library to the community or even with having good library services. It starts with evaluation and planning. The library staff and board must know the library and the community. To use the jargon, they must scan the internal environment, the library, and the external environment, the community.

All planning, from the simplest to the most sophisticated, consists of four basic parts:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to go?
- How do we get there?
- How will we evaluate our success?

INTERNAL SCAN: STUDYING THE LIBRARY

The library board and staff should periodically review the current strengths and weaknesses of the library. Every service and every area of the collection and every area of the library should be included in this review. What assets does the library have that can be built upon? Is there a handsome facility, a friendly staff, a good genre fiction collection, a strong Friends group?

What strengths does the library need to develop? Is there a too-small video collection, poor signage, inadequate Internet skills, an outdated reference collection, an invisible interlibrary loan program, poor public relations?

The director should periodically have an interview with every staff member, including custodial staff, to determine what they need to do their job better. They should not be told to limit their desires to what the library is in a position to fund.

Rather, the director should gain a full picture of staff needs. This also serves as a good vehicle to discover and solve problems, though it should not replace staff meetings and staff evaluation.

The library director should also review the entire physical facility on a regular (but unscheduled) basis.

Questions that should be asked about the library include:

- Is the library building friendly, welcoming and barrier free?
- Does the library have an inviting reading area with comfortable furniture?
- Is the library overcrowded?
- Is the library making good use of the available space?
- Is the library in good repair?
- Are the grounds attractive?
- Is the lighting soft but strong?
- Are the restrooms clean?
- Is the signage large and clear?
- Are the staff members genuinely friendly?

It is good practice for the library director to regularly ask library users or board members to make the same site review. Even a good library staff can become so familiar with a building that they miss a problem.

The library board should also do a board evaluation at least once every two years to make sure it is functioning as effectively as possible. There is a brief guideline for this on page 48 of the *Kansas Public Library Trustee Handbook*.

EXTERNAL SCAN: STUDYING THE COMMUNITY

No public library can offer excellent service unless the staff and board know the community they serve. The library director and the library board should annually review current information on the community's demographic, educational, political and economic trends. They should know:

- How the population is divided
- How good the schools are
- Who the major employers are
- How the community is doing economically

They should also be familiar with:

- The most active groups and organizations
- The most active churches
- The most active civic organizations

They should know:

- Whether genealogy is a major community interest
- Whether the community has an active local history association
- Whether the community has an active fine arts association
- What the major recreations are for men, women and children
- How many children are home-schooled
- How many residents commute to other communities
- Whether the community has demonstrated local support for literacy
- The most outstanding needs of the community

In fact, the list of relevant questions that can be asked about a small community are almost endless and endlessly fascinating.

Every library should gather some objective information about the community once a year. For the library to depend on the opinions of the staff and board often recycles outdated, limited or wrong information. Local government, chambers of commerce, local schools and other agencies often have valuable community information. The latest census supplies a great deal of information. Comparison with similar and neighboring communities is also valuable.

A small library rarely has a lot of money or time to spend on community analysis and an elaborate procedure is not usually necessary. But if the director or another staff member enjoys studying the community and likes to write, a community analysis document can be of great benefit to the library. But such a project will be largely wasted effort unless it is an organic document, meaning one that is regularly reviewed, updated and re-issued to the staff and board. Modern word processing has made it possible for library planning documents to be more current and more useful.

In a small town, the library director should regularly take a thoughtful look at the entire physical community. It is amazing how much information can be gathered simply by looking at every commercial and residential neighborhood.

USING THE INFORMATION

The director and the board should set aside a reasonable amount of time once a year to evaluate both the library and the community on the basis of the information that has been gathered. The director may make a written or verbal report, or both. The library's objectives for the coming fiscal or calendar year should reflect what has been learned and the budget preparation should reflect the library's current priorities.

Any active and vital library will benefit from a half-day board retreat once a year. A growing number of small libraries are making use of this very useful planning tool. If the library is facing a truly major project, such as a building program, a full day retreat may be justified. But a retreat should not be scheduled unless there are

issues that need serious discussion. The board members will quickly become impatient if the retreat is a waste of their time.

A board retreat is still covered by the Kansas Open Meetings Act. The retreat should be announced, just as a regular board meeting is, but it should be specified that it is a working meeting. Those who wish to discuss issues with the board should be invited to a regular board meeting.

Important issues to discuss at a retreat might include:

- The needs of the facility
- The need for a building or redecorating program
- Possibilities for more effective board function
- Improved relations with local government and community leaders
- Staff compensation and benefits
- The need for increased tax support
- Possibilities for grant funding
- A long-term program for community fundraising
- The need for an endowment or foundation
- Special needs for staff training
- Coming needs in library technology
- Special needs in collection development
- Possible partnerships with community agencies and organizations
- The need for practical advice from library consultants or other specialists
- The evaluation of recent major projects or resolved problems

Small libraries do not always need extensive, written long-range plans. But it is critical to have an effective planning process. A library will find it easier to market programs that are wisely selected, effectively implemented and thoughtfully evaluated.

USING THE INFORMATION TO SELECT PRIORITIES

On the basis of comprehensive and current information, a small library staff and board need to consider what their top priorities are and what top priorities they want to develop in the coming fiscal periods. Most small libraries have a combination of the following priorities:

- Staff development
- Building program and/or building maintenance
- Recreational print materials
- Recreational video and audio materials
- Print, video and electronic information with the skilled reference staff to use it
- Resource sharing
- Community information

- Children's services and programming
- Adult programming
- Lifeskills and hobbies
- Senior interests and eldercare
- Local history and genealogy

The board and staff of a small library also have to decide what the library will *not* have as a priority. Small public libraries certainly choose not to be research facilities but even something so obvious should be given some thought. How is the library staff going to serve community residents who are pursuing research on specific topics? These might include farmers, businessmen, clergymen, teachers, professors, students and those with specialized interests. If the library has an active and visible interlibrary loan program and the library staff have good electronic searching skills, then the library is probably offering a reasonable level of service for its size. If not, these areas need to be strengthened.

Good reference service, including effective access to electronic information, effective interlibrary loan and effective use of system services is so basic to modern library service that it must be considered a priority in every Kansas public library.

There will always be services that the library will have as lower priorities but these should be the result of thoughtful planning.

For example, in a small community that has several video outlets competing for customers, the library may choose not to have an entertainment video collection. That can be a legitimate decision but it must be a well-considered one, since popular videos are usually a successful public library service.

In an active community where the residents have many demands on their time, the library may choose not to place an emphasis on adult programming. But again, that must be a careful decision, since it eliminates a service that is usually a major part of library public relations.

CONCLUSION

Before a library can plan effective marketing, the staff and trustees have to consider what they have to market. A business knows what its products are, whether these are narrowly or widely defined. But businesses are also aware that they are selling comfort, convenience, pleasure, status, beauty or fantasy.

A library's products include materials, information access and services. But they also include friendliness, comfort, community and a wide variety of life-enhancing pleasures. Most small libraries instinctively assign a high value to these things. They should be integrated into a planning process. And they should be part of an ongoing marketing campaign.

PART TWO

THE HUMAN SIDE OF MARKETING

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, when librarians have talked about marketing, they have talked about public relations. They have talked about ways to use publicity and programming to make the library's services more visible in the community.

In recent years, there has been a change in the way librarians approach marketing and many of these changes have come from the business world. There has been more emphasis on:

- Studying the needs of library users
- Communicating with library users to find out what they want
- Studying the ways in which library collections and services are offered to the public
- Customized customer service

There has also been increasing emphasis on building influence in the community. This can include:

- Making local government and funding authorities aware of what the library does for the community
- Getting community leaders to believe that the library is important to the community's quality of life
- Getting local educators to understand what the public library does for school-age residents
- Getting parents to understand how critical library services are to their children
- Convincing the media that events at the library are worth covering
- Offering library users and influential citizens opportunities to support the library through financial help and contributed services
- Increasing the library user's enjoyment of the library

- Connecting non-users to the library in various ways so they can discover the library's services

One of the keys to building influence is personal contact. The librarian meets with people in the community both formally and informally. Quite often these meetings are both face-to-face and one-on-one.

Some librarians in small communities find that one obstacle to networking with the community is the difficulty of getting away from the library facility. A one-person library has a critical need, not only for one paid substitute, but for one or two high quality volunteers that can give the library director some mobility.

The library board needs to understand that networking with the community is a very important part of the director's job. Some rural library directors have needed to call a library consultant to help explain why this is so critical.

Many rural librarians, trained in the marketing aspect of their jobs, have a first reaction: "I can't do that." Once they commit to working with people as an absolutely essential component of their position, they find that they are doing it and doing it very well. One library presenter has pointed out that "I don't like politics" can be translated as "I don't like people."* And that, for a good library director, is simply not true.

A critical thing to remember is that a wide variety of personal styles and skills have been successful in rural library administration. In fact, no one personality type can claim success in every situation.

* Pat Wagner, *Building Effective Supervisory Skills*, North Central System, 2000.

MARKETING TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

It is very hard to build effective long-term support for the public library if the library has no relationship with local government. Rural decision makers usually have a big say in whether the library gets an increase in its mill levy or an allocation of financial support beyond the collected library taxes.

It should never be assumed that local officials understand what the public library is doing. Many are not library users. Many are carrying outdated perceptions of public libraries and do not have an awareness of how the library's role is changing.

Some awareness of the library can be built indirectly. Local officials should receive newsletters, brochures, program publicity, short and pithy annual reports. They should also be made cardholders of the public library and sent a library card. Local officials can usually be met, in a preliminary way, at community events.

Local officials usually read the local newspaper with some care but it doesn't hurt to send them a clipping of major stories about library achievements.

Once this indirect relationship is established, there is no substitute for building a personal relationship.

Librarians can learn about officials and what they care about by attending regular meetings of the local government. These meetings are open to the public and they are an opportunity to gather very valuable information.

The librarian should plan personal meetings with key officials. It is wise to request an appointment when budget negotiations are not active so that the focus can be on the library's achievements and what the library needs to accomplish in the future. Such a meeting should be carefully prepared for so it will present the library in the best possible way. It is also very wise to leave a handout that reiterates the major points in simple, bulleted form.

Early meetings should usually take place on the local official's home ground and at his convenience. But if he seems receptive and interested, he can be invited for a tour of the library. This can be used to market both the library's assets and its liabilities. For example, it can be beneficial to show a library that badly needs a building program.

Whatever shape the library is in, the staff should be cordial and welcoming and prepared to offer coffee and refreshments.

BUDGET PREPARATION

Annual budget preparation is an important opportunity to market both the library's needs and the library's accomplishments. Obviously, a line item budget should be presented but more and more libraries are also preparing a program budget.

The program budget allows the staff and board to highlight how different elements of the community will be served during the coming year. A program budget will show how library funds will be spent for:

- Children
- Young adults
- Senior citizens
- Residential centers
- Recreational reading
- Pprograms
- Access to electronic information
- Computer training for the public
- Interlibrary loan
- Videos, audiotapes and other nonprint collections

A program budget gives information on how the library is actually impacting the quality of life in the community and how it is actually meeting the information and recreation needs of the residents. It is a terrific tool for marketing the library to the people whose support is critical.

If it is feasible at all, a verbal presentation should accompany the budget. The presentation should *not* be a review of figures but a short, personable, interesting review of the past year plus a look ahead at the library's future priorities. If other municipal department heads make such a presentation, the library director should certainly make a request to do the same.

CONCLUSION

An adversarial relationship with local government is never acceptable, even though the provocation sometimes exists. Both the library staff and the library board should present an impeccable courtesy to local government. If one local official is totally uninterested in the library, marketing attention should be turned to another, but without acrimony.

Always take the opportunity to thank officials for their support, even if it is considered inadequate. Emphasize that you are looking forward to continued support in the future.

NOTES:

MARKETING TO COMMUNITY LEADERS

INTRODUCTION

In a small town or rural community, the best way to market the library to community leaders is to know the community leaders and be known by them. Some of this is probably already taking place through the librarian's normal involvement with the life of the community. A librarian who is active in a church, in local clubs and in community organizations can hardly help getting to know people. If the librarian is well-known and well-liked, community leaders will pay more attention to library issues.

The library director should make a special effort to be at the table whenever planning for the community's future is taking place. Often, community leaders do not think of the library as being vitally involved in economic development, or even in information access, but this perception can be changed by the library director's persistent presence.

Since rural communities are notoriously short of meeting space, many librarians have found an opening by offering their facility. Others have simply explained to someone they know well why the library should be involved. One Pennsylvania librarian found she could only attend an organization of local business leaders as an observer. Three years later, she was elected its president.* The librarian who functions as a community leader is likely to be perceived as one, but it does take some time.

While there is no substitute for developing both formal and informal relationships with community leaders, these leaders can be kept aware of the library through written and online communication as well. Community leaders should see the library covered in local media, they should receive library newsletters, meaningful annual reports, publicity about library programs and even appeals for financial help. If an individual is a visible community leader, they belong on the library's mailing list or distribution list.

MARKETING TO COMMUNITY LEADERS: CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Many small public libraries develop excellent relationships with local clubs and organizations. These can include Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, Lions, Shriners, Municipal Leagues, Garden Clubs, Federated Women's Clubs, 4H, Scouting and many other groups.

* *Marketing Manual for Public Library Funding*. Written by LevLane Advertising and Public Relations and the Pennsylvania PLA Local Funding Task Force, 1993.

Clubs and organizations are often receptive to supporting the library with a specific project, especially if that project has some relation to the goals of their organization. It is necessary to have some knowledge of the organization and its members before choosing an appropriate request.

When staff members or trustees are respected members of an organization, they can often spot a way in which the library can help the organization. But they have to be ready to think in terms of the library's role.

Many local groups are in need of programs. By asking for a chance to tell the library's most interesting stories, the librarian can help meet this need. An entertaining speaker almost always gets further invitations to speak. If the speaker can market the library's accomplishments and needs with humor and with lively vignettes, the audience will laugh but they will remember the points that are made.

Even if nothing else comes of it, a program gives a few more community residents information about the library and the librarian learns a little more about the community.

Public speaking is a skill that gets much easier with practice and many librarians who would test as introverts have learned to do it very well. But if the library director strongly feels that this will never be a forte, he should conduct a search for someone who can speak easily and happily for the public library. This may be another staff member, a board member or an active library user who really cares about the library.

MARKETING TO COMMUNITY LEADERS: THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Rural library directors often feel intimidated about marketing to local businessmen. They are very well aware that they don't have the funds to develop a sophisticated business collection. However, there are still things that an alert librarian can do. Brief lists of library purchases and Internet sites of general interest to business people are often welcome.

An Internet site of specific interest to a business can simply be commented on in a verbal or written communication. It should be tactfully assumed that the businessman does know about Internet sites in his own field. The librarian can simply comment on discovering the site and finding it very interesting. But since librarians are among the most sophisticated Internet users, the response is often: "I didn't know about that. Thanks."

Many rural librarians have found that offering classes in building Internet skills has been appreciated by the business community. Rural librarians have also offered to maintain community homepages, giving local businesses some welcome extra exposure on the Web.

If resources are identified that would be of real value to the business community but too expensive for the library budget, the library can try some community fundraising. A business, or several businesses together, might have an interest in strengthening the library's collection.

Actually, the better the library staff knows local business people, as individuals, the more likely they are to discover some way to help them. But business people can also become library supporters when they are asked to advise or help the library. This marketing relationship should always be studied as a two-way street.

MARKETING TO COMMUNITY LEADERS: EDUCATORS

In small towns, public librarians have often fostered relationships with the local schools by getting to know the school librarians. If any good projects result from these relationships, these should certainly be publicized to teachers, principals and school superintendents.

Like other community leaders, school officials should receive regular communications about the library. One Missouri librarian sent pictures of her boisterous, student-stuffed library to the principal and superintendent with a simple, positive memo stating how much she enjoyed serving the children and teens. "It gets lively here when school lets out," she commented. When the library needed a building expansion, she talked with the school principal and he became an active supporter of the library's building program.

Both educators and public librarians will want to be active when the community is trying to plan or upgrade information access. Some rural public libraries have partnered with school systems to get the best possible electronic information access. These projects have also led to shared access to catalogs, which gives better service to students and teachers. Technology has sometimes fostered relationships between schools and public libraries where they had not existed before. Such projects should be effectively publicized to the community, since they often strike taxpayers as a good use of public funds.

If a small community is fortunate enough to be home to a community college, the public library should foster a positive relationship with the college library. Again, developments in information technology have often facilitated positive working relationships. Also, public libraries and community colleges have often served as co-sponsors of programs and projects.

A college library greatly expands the information resources of a small community but the residents often have to be reminded that the resource is there. The students can be invited to regard the public library as an additional resource and a recreational facility. A positive relationship between the town and the college is good for both

sides but it doesn't happen automatically. It needs publicity to both sides. This can be done both through online resource sharing and through joint publicity.

CONCLUSION

While they don't call it marketing, many small library directors have done an excellent job of networking with their community. They have developed friendly relations with a wide variety of community residents. They are well-known and well-liked in the community. Marketing strategy simply takes this happy state of affairs and makes it a more conscious part of the library's plans for the future.

MARKETING TO LIBRARY USERS

Librarians have been taught to respect the privacy of library users. Perhaps that is why many librarians do not actively market to the heavy library users. Library users certainly have a right to be left in peace but the patron who is eager to talk is a potential gold mine for reviews, programs and support.

Librarians should never forget that the library users are the library's customers. It is impossible to offer excellent customer service to faceless customers. This is another place where rural libraries have an advantage. Getting to know library users as people is not invasive and is frequently delightful.

People who read a lot are usually proud of the fact and pleased to be acknowledged as one of the library's most active users. They are often willing to chat about a special interest or favorite genre and can sometimes make very valuable suggestions. Library users will often give permission to quote their appreciation of a particular collection or service.

Parents or teachers who make heavy use of youth services should be encouraged to make suggestions for the collection or to participate in the reading programs.

People who like films and watch a lot of videos are often willing to share their interest and to recommend purchases for the library. If they are interested in a particular genre of movies, they may be a potential source for reviews and/or programs.

The library staff should also get to know the heavy computer users and most active Internet users. They can make very valuable suggestions on improving the library's use of electronic information. As volunteers or advisors, computer buffs can be a priceless asset for the library.

A rural businessman regards his most regular customers as very important people. Librarians should view their most regular customers in the same light. Both the businessman and the librarian try to offer excellent service as a matter of professional pride. But building community support is more complicated and more subtle than building a profit profile.

Library users are often so absolutely basic to the library's service that, paradoxically, they become almost invisible. This is a major mistake, especially in a small town.

Marketing to library users as very important people leads to many of the same steps as marketing to community leaders. In both cases, the librarian should seek to cross paths; to know and be known. The library should seek ways to share information with these people, using the same tools of newsletters, media coverage, annual reports.

Library users also appreciate posted reviews and annotated reading lists targeted at their special interest. This is most often done with genre fiction but can be expanded to subject lists for new nonfiction as well.

A librarian with a flair for advisory service can make both the collections and the staff more visible and more appreciated.

Small public libraries often have a "suggestion box" where library users can suggest purchases. But many small library directors hesitate to solicit suggestions too aggressively. They fear that people will be offended if the library is unable to purchase what they want.

An alternative that brings in a lot of information is a "Tell Us What You Enjoyed" form that can be distributed widely. Such a form allows people to list a title and briefly explain why they enjoyed the book, film, magazine or computer program. Users who relish this library service are a potential source for reviews and programs.

Patterns of circulation and use offer extremely valuable information about the community's interests. If the town has a lot of mystery readers, or if videos send library circulation through the roof, or if the library desperately needs more Internet access stations, the library staff should know it and discuss it at staff meetings. It will affect both acquisition and programming.

One of the major values of library programs is that they offer an informal chance for library staff to know library users and learn more about their interests.

Turning regular library users into a cadre of active library supporters will pay off if the library's support is threatened. They can and will speak for the library. Citizens who make it clear that the library is important to them have more impact on local government than librarians who understandably support libraries.

MARKETING FOR A TARGET AUDIENCE

INTRODUCTION

Librarians have a tendency to think that excellent library service will be rewarded by the community. The truth is that excellence in library service is only half of the equation for a successful library. The library must be perceived by the community as being essential to the quality of life in the community. The library staff and board must work to make the library and its services visible to the community.

Keep in mind the fundamental principle of influence. *“Influence is derived from the perceptions of the person to be influenced, not from the perceptions of the person doing the influencing. The key to building your influence lies in your ability to shape the perceptions of others.”**

In other words, the staff and the board must shape the perceptions of the community leaders and the community residents so that they understand the benefits of having a good public library.

Many librarians work hard to develop programs and services but they neglect the work it would take to make the target audience aware of the value of these programs and services.

EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE ONE:

Suppose the library wants to have an outreach program to the community's long term care facility. Library staff communicate with residents to learn about their needs. Materials are delivered to the home, requests are solicited and filled. Some residents read regular books, some read large print, some listen to audiobooks or music. The service becomes a good one and it is valued by the residents of the facility. *Public relations* for this service would mean that the library staff maintains good relations with the residents and understands what they need and want.

But *marketing* this service would mean making the facility administrator aware of the value placed on this service.

The director or a designated staff member has circulation statistics for every type of material plus comments from the residents that indicate they are genuinely grateful to have this service available.

* Gary Hartzell, *Building Influence for the School Librarian*. Linworth Publishing 1994.

An appointment is made with the administrator, the service is described briefly but effectively and a one-page flyer repeating the most important points is given. The administrator is also asked if they have any suggestions for improving the service.

There are no guarantees on the outcome of such a meeting, but the librarian has just dramatically improved the chances that support for this service will be continued and that the facility administrator will retain the belief that the library is significant to her chosen work.

This is only a likely outcome if the librarian does believe the service is important and wants it to continue. If service to the long-term care facility has been a lackluster project, this kind of marketing will not be a good use of staff time.

EXAMPLE TWO:

Many small libraries have effective publicity connected with their summer reading program and most communities consider it a pleasant service to have available for children. It is often sufficiently colorful and photogenic to attract the local media. This is good *public relations*.

Marketing the critical importance of this program would include finding ways to make more serious points:

- The development of language skills is critically important to the development of young children. If they are frequently involved with reading and verbal exchanges and encouraged to express feelings, imagination and ideas, they will develop the language skills they will need when they start school.

Many small libraries are sponsoring reading programs in the fall and winter so they can concentrate some attention on the preschool children. This is an excellent chance to make this point through special publicity and programs.

- Research has indicated that the biggest single predictor of success in school is whether the children are read to when they are young. To librarians and heavy library users, this is so obvious as to be a truism. But the point is only beginning to gain force with the general public. It needs to be made as often as possible.
- Research has also indicated that children who read for pleasure over the summer retain their reading skills and continue to build their vocabulary. They have a large advantage when they start the new school year. Publicity for the summer reading program can make this point.

Children should not be taught that public library reading programs are anything but fun. It is when they are having fun that they learn readily and happily.

Adults should be taught that these fun programs are building reading and verbal skills that will help their children succeed in school.

EXAMPLE THREE:

Some rural library staff have taken the lead in offering small classes on Internet skills to members of the public. *Public relations* for this program would involve making sure that the public really is aware of it and that the classmates feel comfortable and welcome when they attend class.

Marketing for this program would involve making sure that the community leadership and local government become aware that the library is making this contribution to the community. This can be done through media coverage or through the library newsletter or through more informal communications.

Feedback from the participants should be gathered as part of the evaluation for the project. Favorable comment can be used very effectively if the library offers Internet classes again.

If the participants are enthusiastic and good teachers are available, the library should very seriously consider continuing the project. It can be a very valuable community service. But it is also a very modern, very polished role for a rural public library to take in the information society. The effort it represents should not be wasted but should be used to benefit the total image of the library.

EVALUATION WITH MARKETING IN MIND

Any project the library implements should be evaluated. If the project has not been a success, the library has two choices:

1. They can improve the service, or
2. They can eliminate it.

Improving a project might involve better communication with the target audience, better funding, better publicity, better procedures, better record keeping or better materials.

A service should not be eliminated unless the library staff can articulate the reasons why it should not be a library priority:

- Perhaps it is not needed or wanted badly enough to justify what it costs the library.
- Perhaps the service is outdated and should no longer be a priority.

- Perhaps there are obstacles that the library staff cannot overcome with their available resources.

If the project is considered very successful, the evaluators should ask this question: What kind of communication or publicity does this project need to be perceived as important by:

1. The target audience?
2. Those relevant community leaders who should know about this particular project?

Many librarians work hard to develop programs and services but they neglect the work it would take to make the community aware of the value of these programs and services.

The value that the public places on library service can translate into support for the library by community leadership. There have been cases where local government has been genuinely surprised and impressed at the groundswell of public support the library can muster when its support is threatened. The threat was decreased or even reversed as a result. But that kind of support only results from a public that knows what the library is doing for the community.

PART THREE

MARKETING LIBRARY SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

The library staff and board should consider how to market the library's most basic services. These can include the facility, the collections, information access, community information, programs and extra services such as public telefax or public Internet access. None of these will have adequate visibility to the public without marketing and public relations.

A marketing review of the library usually moves from the general to the specific. Marketers speak of designing an environment or presenting a facility. Neither term really implies the amount of work it can take for a community to have a beautiful public library.

Marketers speak of showcasing a collection. In small library terms, that usually means publicizing a specific collection or displaying part of the collection so it can be discovered by the library users.

Programs and services primarily need effective publicity so that the public will become aware of them and can take advantage of them. Since this is traditional public relations, it is more familiar territory for most library directors. But most people underestimate the amount of publicity it takes to make the public aware of what the library has to offer.

For all of the library's materials, services and programs, the questions to be asked are:

- Who needs to know about this?
- Why will they care about it?
- What is the best way to tell them about it?

MARKETING THE FACILITY

INTRODUCTION

A good library contributes to the quality of life offered in the community, making it a good place to live. A small public library is three different, but equally important, things:

1. It is a community center. It should be a nourishing environment, one that people enjoy using because it is comforting and attractive.
2. It is a recreation center that people should regard as an active source of pleasure, whether their taste is for genre fiction, popular science, local history, magazines, videos or programs.
3. It is an information center where people should be able to find and use resources effectively.

The key to marketing the library facility is to study it as objectively as possible. Sometimes, when this is done, there is one obvious conclusion: “We *have* to have a building program.” A remodeling, expansion or new library program is a major undertaking that usually involves years of patient effort. The marketing of a building program could well be a separate publication.*

But there are often improvements that can be made to the facility that don’t involve such drastic measures. Sometimes a coat of paint, a landscaping, a change of lighting, a redecorated children’s department, a computer lab or an improved signage can result in a library that is more appealing, more useful or easier to use.

The thoughtful review of the library facility should take place annually, for the sake of maintenance and repair. But the staff and the board should also keep asking: How can this library be more attractive and more effective? The importance of the question never goes away.

HARD QUESTIONS

The questions that should be asked about the facility include but are not limited to:

- Is this a building people enjoy visiting?

* For small libraries that need a building program, the state library and the regional library systems have published *Designing a Fine Library*, 2000. It is available from the Kansas State Library.

- Are the grounds attractive and well maintained?
- Do exterior signs make it very clear that this *is* the public library even to those with impaired vision?
- Have the library's hours been effectively publicized through the community?
- Is there adequate parking?
- Can the building be used by those who are disabled, fragile or elderly?
- Does the library have good signage with large print and maximum contrast? Do these signs clearly identify departments and services and guide people easily through the collections?
- Are collections and services arranged logically? Are they easy to find?
- Is the library overcrowded and cluttered?
- Is the library's decor attractive and welcoming?
- Is the furniture comfortable and attractive?
- Is the color scheme dated?
- Do different groups such as children, young adults, magazine browsers, video users, genealogists and computer users have defined space that they can use with reasonable comfort?
- Is the library able to support effective, up-to-date library technology that meets the community's needs?
- Are the restrooms clean, strongly-lighted and as barrier-free as possible?
- Does the library have any individual touches that give it character, such as artwork, antiques, local history, special displays or a clever children's play area? Non-readers frequently take visitors to the library "because I want you to see this."

CHANGES FOR THE BETTER

There are many examples of fairly minor changes that have given the library higher visibility and appeal in the community. Part of these examples are from Kansas. Some happened in other states.

- Fredonia Public Library changed their dated and worn color scheme for a new tweed carpet, yellow walls and stenciling and artwork in the children's library.
- A number of libraries report that bicycle racks are becoming almost as important as parking.
- Manhattan Public Library took advantage of their Flint Hills heritage and acquired some decorative limestone signs. The library is also planning a very distinctive interior sculpture.
- One community garden club gave a small library a garden, which became a favorite gathering place (almost a second meeting room).
- One community with an active garden club was given plants, arrangements and decorated evergreens to decorate the library all year round.
- Ness City Public Library rearranged their main lobby, moving the circulation desk back and creating an open area where the copy machine, catalog station and Internet stations could be easily seen. Then they added art displays, book border and shelves of knickknacks to add character. The community had a powerful reaction to a nearly cost-free rearrangement.
- One library moved to separate the children's area from services used by seniors and found that both groups were much happier.
- One library painted their cold-blue meeting room a soft yellow and put in quilt-blocked curtains. The community gave the change rave reviews.
- Grant County in Ulysses became an early adopter of the concept of a library computer lab and found it changed the library's services dramatically.
- One library established a tradition of lavish Christmas decorations and started a Christmas tree contest. A number of community groups began holding their Christmas celebrations at the library, since it was the most beautiful place in town.
- One library replaced their dim restroom lighting with strong lights and light paint. To their amazement, restroom vandalism ceased.
- Newton Public Library took advantage of the community's history as a railway center and gave their children's department a railroad and agricultural theme.
- One community carpenter gave the library a large castle to be used as the children's playroom.
- One community turned the library into a permanent gallery for local artists.

- One local artist did special comic illustrations for every part of the library's collection.
- Morrill Public Library in Hiawatha created a Young Adult Area that had attractive, homelike furniture, clever decoration and improved materials. "Kids like the area just fine. Adults really like it!"
- Kensington Community/School Library bought furniture and a silk tree to create a comfortable reading area. "The library is warmer and friendlier and more welcoming to the public."
- One cluttered and storageless library had a local craftsman build a whole wall of storage cupboards.
- De Soto Branch Library in Johnson County relocated audio and CD books to an area near the entrance and the circulation desk for the convenience of their many commuters.

CONCLUSION

The library building is the most obvious presentation of the library to the community. A library that is shabby, overcrowded, dated, institutional or hard to use is sending the wrong message to the community. A library that is attractive, distinctive, comfortable and easy to use is more likely to become a vital part of the community.

MARKETING THE COLLECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

When a library user has a specific need for information or entertainment, modern information retrieval should allow access to what the library has. Modern information retrieval involves not just the catalog, but space use, collection maintenance, excellent signage and labels on books and other materials.

Marketing a collection goes beyond easy access to showcase segments of the collection and bring them to the public's attention. This increases the circulation of the collection and increases the value that will be placed on it.

NONFICTION

Small public libraries can make very effective special displays of non-fiction material. This is most often done by tying such displays to holidays, national observances, national events or local events. But there are many possibilities:

- If the library has a special display or exhibit, any relevant materials should be pulled from the collection so people can learn more about it.
- Any major recreational or social interest of the community can be turned into a display. These might include:
 - Arts
 - Music
 - Genealogy
 - Local history
 - Water sports
 - Hunting
 - Recreation animals
 - Recreation vehicles
 - Home management
 - Gardening
 - Sewing crafts
- Displays of the most readable of the popular science books are often surprisingly effective. For example, space events that are in the news can be tied to displays of materials.

- Displays of lifeskills books under such titles as “Self-Sufficient Living” or “Simple Abundance” can tie together such things as gardening, home management, cooking, home decorating, money management and self-help philosophy. Any one of these can also be an effective small display.
- Displays of fine art materials are often both fascinating and beautiful. These can include painting, drawing, jewelry, decorating and flower arranging.

The purpose of nonfiction displays is to highlight parts of the collection and give library users a chance to discover them.

A staff member with a taste for the project can have a great deal of fun with it. One library did a “You Won’t Believe What We Found In This Library” display after completing their inventory. Another did a “Future that Never Was” display of outdated science materials that they had weeded from their collection. Still another collected all the vampire books they could find to go with the community blood drive.

Many creative pairings of library exhibits and citizen interests can be moved into the community. If the actual materials cannot be used, book jackets, posters, flyers and bookmarks can make people aware of the potential of the library collection:

- Banks/money management
- Hardware stores/home repair, gardening
- Camera stores/photography
- Computer stores /computer books
- Travel agencies/travel
- Music stores/music
- Museums/historic bestsellers, social history
- Sports equipment/sports
- Florists/flower arranging
- Service garages/motor manuals
- Annual fairs/agriculture, crafts

This can also work in reverse. In spring, a garden center or hardware store might bring an exhibit of flowers and plants to the library to pair with appropriate library materials.

FICTION

Showcasing parts of a fiction collection can be even more successful than showcasing nonfiction. It has the added benefit of taking some of the pressure off the constantly besieged new book displays. Adult patrons can get a lot of enjoyment out of displays of older bestsellers, older genre fiction, older inspirational fiction, older comedies, children’s classics or novels that were once considered controversial or scandalous.

The small public library often starts with its role as a recreational facility and places top priority on the acquisition of popular and genre fiction. Because this is the most visible and successful part of their library service, the staff doesn't think of the benefits of marketing it. In fact, it can build excellent support for the library to market mysteries to mystery readers, westerns to western readers and popular bestsellers to those who gravitate to the new book displays. Ways to do this include:

- Articles in the newspaper
- Interviews and/or programs on particular types of fiction
- Special book displays
- Posted book reviews
- Posted fiction trivia
- Posted URLs for fiction Internet sites
- Websites for the library's strong fiction collections
- Bookmarks
- Drawings by local artists on fictional series or characters
- Book talks
- Book discussion groups

Public librarians often do not realize that many people don't know how much popular fiction costs the library. Community fundraising to support fiction can often raise public awareness of entertainment costs even if it doesn't raise a large amount of money. Ways to do this include:

- Memorial book programs
- Adopt-a-book programs
- Wish lists and wishing trees

Some libraries have annual campaigns to strengthen a particular collection, publicizing the need for new children's books, new romances or new westerns.

Some small library staff are skeptical about investment in classic fiction. But new and replacement classics should be put into the New Fiction Display with the other new books. Unless they are easily recognized as a "heavy" like *War and Peace*, they usually do quite well. The idea that classic fiction won't circulate is often a self-fulfilling prophecy and an unintentional insult to the community.

NONPRINT COLLECTIONS

One of the hardest tasks for smaller libraries is to balance the different media that have become increasingly important in recent years. Small libraries are expected to carry not just books and periodicals, but videotapes, audiobooks, local history, genealogy records and access to electronic information. A library staff can only decide how strong the emphasis on a format should be by knowing the needs of the community.

Many small public libraries have worked very hard to build their video and audio collections because these are popular services that raise the library's circulation. Recently, small libraries have been faced with the development of DVD, which is rapidly increasing in popularity. They have often found it necessary to supplement the library's tax dollars with grants or fundraising to support these services. It makes no sense to put so much effort into an additional collection and then fail to market it effectively to the community. The same techniques that the library develops to market print collections can be used to market nonprint collections.

Small libraries have had circulating collections of many things: toys, games, stuffed animals, artworks, cameras, video players, jumper cables, sewing patterns, cake pans, tools, fishing equipment. Any such choice, no matter how unusual, can be right for such an individual community.

Marketing a non-traditional collection can be very successful because it is interesting. It can appeal to the media as an interesting story or a good photo-op. One library had a hilarious demonstration of their fishing poles by local fisherman. Another used a cake decorating class to get some publicity for their collection of cake pans.

Non-traditional collections can be both fun and genuinely useful. But it is sometimes wise to make it clear that tax dollars are not supporting the service.

CONCLUSION

Librarians usually underestimate the amount of publicity it takes to make the public aware of even the most welcome collection. The number of citizens who go into mild shock when they realize they can have popular movies for free and for a reasonable loan period, is both funny and sad.

NOTES:

MARKETING PUBLIC SERVICES

COMMUNITY SERVICES

There are a range of information services that the library can offer the public in a small town. These might include:

- A coin-operated copier
- A public telefax
- Tax forms
- Maintaining government records
- Distributing community information
- Public use computers and typewriters
- Training sessions for computer use or Internet searching
- Community website maintenance
- Outreach services to residential homes, prisons, hospitals and homebound library users
- Access to local history and genealogy materials

What services the library chooses to make a priority depend on a number of factors. These include:

- The size of the community
- The interests of the community
- The library's financial resources
- The interests and aptitudes of the library staff and volunteers

A service is most effective when it is being offered by someone who believes in the service and enjoys the work. A poor service being halfheartedly pursued by an inadequately trained staff member is certainly not worth marketing. When a service is not successful, it should be reviewed and either improved or eliminated.

Many small libraries offer such services and then take no steps to get credit for offering them. It is worth listing such services when the library is doing reports or publicity to funding authorities or community leadership.

Some information services, such as outreach services or genealogy materials, should be marketed directly to the target audience.

ACCESS TO ELECTRONIC INFORMATION

There is a section on using electronic information for marketing in the chapter called Tools for Marketing. But electronic information should also be mentioned as a critically important library service.

Every Kansas library should have as many public-use Internet stations as needed to offer the community electronic information access through the public library. The public library standards can be consulted as a guide to the amount of appropriate access and the system technology consultants can offer very valuable assistance when planning for information access.

But the obligation of a modern public library does not stop with providing public Internet access. The library staff has to be able to offer the public a reasonable reference service that includes searching skills with both print and electronic resources.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Many times people have information needs that will be best met by other agencies or services in the community rather than by the library's collections or by access to electronic information. Some small libraries keep a database of community services, others keep a simple card file. Community information tends to be most effective when the library staff is trained to think in terms of community resources and partnering and when there is some mechanism for reviewing and updating the information. It can also help if staff members share what they have learned about community resources at staff meetings.

Community information and referral can be labor intensive, but it can also result in some very pleased information consumers. It is part of having an exceptionally helpful and user-friendly library staff. If it is one of the library's strengths, it should be marketed with other library services. If this information can be placed online, it is an ideal candidate for a link with a library or community website. Even if the information is not available online, its existence should be publicized there.

Since community information is labor intensive, yet very valuable, it is often a good project for a good volunteer. A volunteer can check and update community information and also help the community become aware of the service.

MARKETING THROUGH PROGRAMS

THE BENEFITS OF PROGRAMMING

Well-designed and implemented programs can be one of the most effective library services, resulting in greatly increased visibility for the library. Programming in public libraries is a big field. Programs can offer valuable information or they can be pure entertainment or they can meet a cultural need in the community.

Programming can have several marketing benefits for the public library:

- Programs can make the library more visible to the total community by bringing the library into the news.
- Programs can make the library collections more visible, if displays form part of the program.
- Programs can introduce the library to community residents who don't usually use it.
- Programs can help give people a warm and friendly feeling about the library, either as a place that has helped them or as a place that has given them pleasure.

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Programs that have been successful in public libraries have included:

- Presentations on life skills such as home buying, money management, time management, computer use, electronic information access
- Presentations on recreational interests such as hunting, fishing, gardening, sewing crafts, cooking, current fashions, drawing, local attractions, local recreation areas
- Presentations on community interests, concerns or local history
- Presentations by musicians, storytellers, entertainers, local theatre groups

Sometimes these programs are for children. One library sponsored an annual "Tea for Teddy Bears." It was comparatively frivolous but the media loved it. It was creative, colorful and very photogenic.

Other libraries have sponsored annual pet shows or Halloween costume parades or Easter egg hunts. The annual summer reading program can be a designated priority that becomes a lavish celebration.

But often these programs are for adults. One Kansas library sponsors an annual garden tour. It does triple duty as a fundraiser, a community service and an entertainment.

Other libraries have sponsored Christmas events such as home tours.

Some public libraries have taken the ordinary library book sale and turned it into a lavish annual party that becomes a cherished community tradition.

One library used Veterans' Day to have a program by veterans on their experiences while serving their country. It turned out to be an extraordinarily moving program.

The programs chosen by the public library depend on many of the same factors as other library services. What does the community need? What are the library's resources? What would the staff, trustees and Friends like to do? Is the purpose information or entertainment?

PUBLICITY FOR A PROGRAM

For a small library, it is better to restrict programming to the programs that the library can do well. If a program is worth the library's time and effort to sponsor, it is worth adequate publicity to make it a success.

The library should use some combination of small town publicity:

- Good coverage in the local newspaper is one of the best ways to publicize a program.
- Public service announcements on the radio will reach an additional audience.
- In a small town, paper publicity can be critically important. Striking, colorful flyers should be posted in the library and through the community. Flyers should be taken to local gatherings so that only a very brief announcement of the event needs to be requested.
- Book displays can call attention to the program and showcase materials from the collection at the same time.
- A targeted mailing can be sent to people who would have a special interest in the program.
- If the speaker is from a club or organization, the organization should be asked to publicize the event to their own members. They are usually glad to do so if they are given reasonable lead time.

Library directors have a tendency to underestimate the amount of publicity a program needs before the public really becomes aware of it. It is heartbreaking to hear a regular library user bemoaning the fact that they didn't even know an event was taking place.

MAKING THE EVENT A SUCCESS

There are several critical rules for all program planners:

- Plan carefully.
- Make checklists.
- Put all arrangements and agreements in writing.
- Check all publicity for typos, inaccuracies and incorrect information.
- Double check everything.
- Verify time and place and arrangements with presenters at least 24 hours in advance or earlier if they are coming from out of town.
- Make sure the meeting room and available restrooms are clean and that everything is in place.
- Make sure the speaker is warmly welcomed and well cared for. They should have water, sound system if necessary, and anything else they need to make their presentation a success.
- Take advantage of the opportunity to distribute library publicity or check out relevant materials.
- Have refreshments. Food and drink adds a friendly, social note that will make the audience more receptive to the event. It is an excellent investment of even slender resources. Have food set up and ready to go before the event.
- Take advantage of the networking opportunity. Mingle with the crowd and get to get to know people.
- Arrange to have specific people help with cleanup or expect to do it yourself.

Make the speaker(s) feel appreciated. It is sometimes appropriate to pay program presenters but many are doing it as a contribution to the library. They should receive a small gift, an honorary membership in the Friends of the Library or some other token. They should always receive a personal thank-you letter within a few days of the event. A small library must have a reputation for appreciation.

SHOULD PROGRAMMING BE A PRIORITY?

Most public libraries choose to make programming a priority but some do not. It is better to have a few high-quality programs than a multitude of poorly marketed, unsuccessful ones.

Some public libraries are located in lively, active communities where the residents have many demands on their time. They have chosen not to make library programs a priority but to concentrate their efforts in other areas. That can be a legitimate decision.

However, public library programs *most often fail because they have not been effectively marketed to their target audience*. That possibility should be carefully considered before programs are eliminated as a priority library service.

Note: Much of the material in this section was adapted from a KPLACE program presented by Carol Ann Robb, Reference and Adult Services Librarian, Pittsburg Public Library.

PART FOUR

TOOLS FOR MARKETING

INTRODUCTION

When a small library makes a commitment to market the library's programs and services, they have to consider their best tools for marketing. This is something that varies widely from community to community. Small libraries have used a variety of techniques and tools for marketing and public relations. These have included:

- Meetings with local government to plan for the library's support
- Networking with community leaders
- Focus groups with targeted library users to learn more about their needs
- Partnering with the media to learn how to generate effective publicity for the library
- Using internal publishing for newsletters, flyers, brochures, bookmarks
- Using library and community Web pages to communicate about the library's hours and services

Some libraries have excellent relationships with the media, while others have found the media unresponsive and have used alternatives, such as internal publishing and distribution, to publicize their programs.

Some librarians enjoy networking with community residents and find building relationships the best use of their available time. They are often very good speakers who can present excellent programs.

Some librarians like to communicate through the written word. They enjoy constructing newsletters, flyers, brochures and annual reports that really highlight the library's accomplishments.

Some librarians have a flair for successful programs and have increased their library's visibility through creative programming for both adults and children.

Some librarians have truly enjoyed the development of electronic information. They have been very successful at teaching it, using it for reference and using it to market the library.

As any small town resident knows, small communities are very individual. There is no one right way to market a small library, especially since some marketing techniques

are fairly new for smaller libraries. And even when the library staff and board do select their priorities, they have to remember that not everything can be done at once. Reasonable timelines are needed for programs and services to be effective.

This chapter covers several tools that are becoming increasingly important for small libraries:

- Marketing through the media
- Internal publishing
- Marketing through electronic information
- Using small groups to design customer service
- Marketing through community fundraising

NOTES:

MARKETING WITH THE MEDIA

INTRODUCTION

The two keys to a successful relationship with small town media is preparation and having something the media people will value. In most small towns, the local newspaper and the local radio station are the most important sources of news for the local residents. A local television station is sometimes a good source for coverage of major library stories. The library staff should study the major local media until they are familiar with their style and what they have to offer. Then the library should seek to form partnerships with the media.

It is a good idea to have a media kit or binder where there is a page of contact information, preferred styles of delivery and tips for the best communication for every major media partner.

Media representatives who work with the library should be given a basic information packet about the library. This should include information about the library, its most essential services, its website and contact information for library staff.

Your best contacts on the media should receive the same level of regular communication that local government, community leaders and heavy library users get. From the library's point of view, they are critically important people. If their relationship with the library is both personal and efficient, they will have a greater interest in helping the library.

The library can also become an information source for the media. Media people should be reminded that the library staff is willing to look things up or to double check facts in ready reference sources.

Remember that media people are working against deadlines. They need their calls returned promptly and their questions answered honestly. If the library director is the one working with the media, their backup during sick leave or vacation needs to know how to respond to the media.

WHAT IS NEWSWORTHY?

A library trying to establish a partnership with the media should consider each story carefully. Is it newsworthy? Why would people want to have this information? It needs to have importance to the community as well as the library. The library needs to be involved with really *doing* something new before the media will be interested. Important topics include:

- New library services
- Library building projects
- Services or information that address currently newsworthy topics
- Unusual services
- Celebration of major library anniversaries
- Public training programs sponsored or co-sponsored by the library
- Major success stories
- Exhibits and displays
- Special programs

THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Find out where library news will go and who will be receiving it. Then ask to meet that person or persons and ask their preferences on news coverage and delivery of library news. Ask their advice about events that are considered photo opportunities. Ask their advice on working with newspaper deadlines. Ask who takes their duties when they are away. An open willingness to learn how things should be done will give the library an advantage when pursuing news coverage.

In a small community, the librarian often hand delivers library news. This is done both to guarantee that the news release gets to the right place at the right time and to maintain the personal contact with the reporter. But the reporter may have a strong preference for a particular form of delivery, such as email or fax. A follow-up phone call for material that is time-sensitive is often a good idea.

The newspaper will ordinarily be interested in covering events that are newsworthy, compelling or unusual. A small library is usually advised to limit press releases to a few stories that do have wide appeal.

However, the library should prepare several stories on library services and/or library people and let the newspaper know that they are interested in further coverage on a slow news day.

WRITING A GOOD NEWS RELEASE

- Keep it simple, keep it short. A news release should be one page, no more than two.
- Remember your key message and your target audience. What do you want the reader to know?
- Consider what makes the story newsworthy.

- Indicate at the top if the story would be a “Good Photo Opportunity.”
- If the library submits photos, they should be good quality pictures, with clear identification attached.
- Follow the locally preferred format: date, name, headline, body, etc.
- Include name, daytime phone and e-mail for the contact for the story.
- Double-space the news release.
- Write in the third person.
- Make the headline interesting.
- The first paragraph is the most critical and should contain the most important information. The release should answer what, who, when, and where.
- Successive paragraphs should further describe the event, including why and how.
- The language should be clear and simple, with short sentences and short paragraphs. Jargon should be avoided.
- The news release should include the proper closing indicator. Often this is the # sign or -30-.
- The news release should be carefully proofread for error-free copy.
- The news release should be distributed carefully, not too early but certainly not too late. Most things are marked “For immediate release.”
- It should be distributed by the locally preferred delivery method.
- If the story has complexity or time-sensitivity there should be a follow-up phone call that answers questions.

WRITING A GOOD MEDIA ADVISORY

An advisory is used to alert the media about a coming event and encourage their presence. It should never be more than one page, and it should follow a simple outline that highlights the key information: who, when, where, what, why and how.

If the event would lend itself to photos, the media advisory should be marked “Good photo opportunity.”

The media advisory should have full contact information on the right person to call for questions.

WORKING WITH LOCAL RADIO

Most small library directors prefer to learn media skills with the newspaper before trying to make effective use of radio. However, a librarian who speaks easily and well and can think on their feet can find radio and television very attractive.

It is important to learn what the local radio station has to offer:

- Is there a community calendar and who runs it?
- Who has the local talk shows?
- Who has feature segments?

PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

If you are doing an interview, it is important to prepare carefully. Write down everything that is known about the topic. Research any unanswered questions. Determine the most important points that you need to make. Give them to the interviewer, if possible.

Remember that you will have to live with everything you say. Keep your responses as positive as possible. Avoid rambling, redundancy and information that isn't accurate.

If a question addresses the most important part of the topic, let the interviewer know that: "The most important point I have to make is...."

If you really don't know the answer to a question, say so: "That is an interesting question but I don't have that information. I will be interested to see what we can find out."

Most people are nervous before interviews but there are a few tips that can help:

- Rehearse the answers to potential questions.
- Have something to drink with you.
- Remember this is basically a conversation. Don't try to alter your normal style.
- If the pacing of your talk gets too fast, make an effort to slow it down.
- Don't be afraid to pause for a few seconds to collect your thoughts.
- Don't give yourself a hard time. Unless you are having a very good day, you won't be completely satisfied with your answers.

PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP

Small libraries usually have less media to work with than large ones. But small libraries can usually set up contacts with the relevant people and learn from them how things need to be done.

Partnering with the media is not something that the librarian has to do alone. The librarian should not be afraid to say what kind of help is needed:

- Sometimes a staff member, a board member or a volunteer knows a media person and can help with an introduction.
- Sometimes a staff member, a board member or a volunteer has a flair for working with the media. They may have the writing style that is needed for newspaper coverage or they may have a natural comfort with public speaking.
- A good photographer who enjoys covering library events is a priceless asset. But they should not be asked to meet extensive costs out of their own pocket.

Other material was adapted from *A Marketing Manual for Public Library Funding* by LevLane Advertising and Public Relations and the Pennsylvania PLA Public Library Local Funding Task Force, 1993.

NOTES:

Note: Much of the material in this section was adapted from a workshop packet designed by Marsha Bennett, Community Relations Coordinator, Johnson County Library.

SELF-PUBLISHING

INTRODUCTION

One of the most effective public relations tools for the small public library is self-publishing. It is not being used enough, considering the tremendous value it has to offer. It costs very little to generate. It needs a word processor, access to clip art, a few weights of colored paper and access to a good copier. It can be formal or informal and offers great scope for creativity. It also offers a wonderful independence.

The cost of distributing it can be scaled up or down. In a very small community, most of it can be hand delivered. "Papering the town" is frequently a delightful job that the librarian looks forward to.

Self-publishing goes everywhere. It offers a way to communicate with many elements in the community. It can be targeted at community leaders, schools, library users, special interest groups, computer users or the entire community. It is critical to the success of programs but it can also be used effectively to market collections, facilities, services and technology.

Self-publishing in small libraries can include:

- Bookmarks
- Calendars
- Brochures
- Packets
- Flyers
- Newsletters
- Posters
- Buttons
- Shirts

BOOKMARKS

The bookmark is small but its power is mighty in a small community. Anything that can fit on a bookmark can be effectively marketed on a bookmark. Small libraries have used the simple bookmark to advertise:

- Hours - Only the heaviest users have these memorized.
- History - This is obviously confined to the interesting highlights but can be effective.
- Services - No library should assume that the public knows what it offers.

- Basic information such as address, phone number, administrative staff and website.
- The annual report - The library's important accomplishments for one year will go on a large bookmark.
- Basic data about the collections - The numbers are more impressive than you realize.

Bookmarks should not be smaller than one inch by five inches. It is not usually practical to make them larger than three inches by ten inches. Print and contrast should be chosen for maximum readability.

CREATIVE BOOKMARKS

The bookmark is a great way to market basic information. But it can also be used creatively. A whole fundraising campaign can go on a series of bookmarks:

- "Do you love to read? Ask about our Adopt-a-Book Program."
- "Do you love movies? Sponsor a video for the library."
- "Have you lost someone you loved? A book can be a wonderful tribute."
- "Believe it or not, we have a _____ collection. Let us know if you can donate one."
- "This library has a Christmas list. Can you help us with any of these? _____"

Remember that the bookmark can only serve as the introduction. Staff and volunteers have to be familiar with the program or they can't help the people who are interested.

The bookmark can also carry a variety of interesting facts that market the value of the library:

- "Research indicates that reading to your children is the single biggest thing you can do to help them succeed in school."
- "The books we circulated last year would cost at least \$_____ if purchased at a major bookstore."
- "In _____, this library circulated 12 items for every person living inside the service area. The *Kansas Library Statistics* confirms that this is a tremendous amount of reading for a community of _____."
- "Harry Potter made friends with 1700 children and adults at this library."

One library collected favorite quotes on a variety of topics, put them on bookmarks and then put them in circulating materials. The library users enjoyed the fun and it ended up becoming quite a community tradition.

TRAVELING BOOKMARKS

Bookmarks can be created for a special audience but they are usually intended for the greater community. They should have a strong presence both inside and outside the library. If they are placed in circulating books, they will have more effect than when they are simply placed on service desks. They have also been placed, with permission, in banks, restaurants, stores, grocery sacks, utility bills and other locations.

FLYERS

Flyers are ephemeral single sheets that are inexpensive to produce and very versatile. They can be used to advertise programs, special collections and services. They can carry monthly event calendars, annotated booklists, favorite author lists.

Flyers are often used for information that has a time limit or special interest appeal. They should be bright, clever and eye-catching. They are usually posted but can be left on flat surfaces. Flyers should be widely distributed through the library and through the community.

BROCHURES

A brochure is a folding pamphlet or booklet that can carry quite a bit of information but still be very portable and convenient. Brochures are usually less ephemeral than flyers and advertise programs, services or campaigns of longer duration.

If a library has a brochure that advertises its basic hours, services, collections and programs, it can be a good investment to spend a little more money to achieve quantity, durability and a professional appearance. If a library has a brochure that markets something very important, such as a building program, this can be even more important. When the library is creating an important brochure, it is wise to seek professional advice from someone who has experience with printing, layout or public relations.

Information on a brochure should be broken into short sections or bulleted lists, with liberal use of headlines and spacing. It should move logically from the most important points to the supporting information. The target audience should be able

to easily absorb what the library wants them to know. Dense verbiage is not a good idea.

NEWSLETTERS

Small library directors often wonder how they can market the library and still have time to run the library. One of the best answers is trickling down from systems and large libraries. Library newsletters are incredibly versatile. They are one of the best ways to stay in touch with local government officials, community leaders, educators, trustees, Friends and library users. They can market to several target audiences with every issue.

Some smaller libraries do quarterly rather than monthly newsletters because of lack of time or limited funds. But shortage of material is never a problem in any viable library. The choice of material is so wide that newsletter editors frequently bemoan the space limitations. Newsletters can carry articles on:

- The library's partnerships with other agencies or organizations
- Appreciation for special services to the library
- Appreciation for an improvement in library funding
- Community fundraising
- The library's goals for the coming year
- Friends' projects
- Coming library programs
- Successful library programs
- Holiday celebrations
- Special collections
- Genre collections
- Materials for special interest groups such as quilters, gardeners, hunters, pet owners, genealogists, boatmen, movie buffs, etc.
- Circulation and use patterns
- Library technology
- Internet sites
- Library services to special populations
- Library projects
- Major accomplishments
- State or national library issues
- News of neighboring libraries
- Library problems

Library newsletters can also carry:

- A director's column
- Profiles of staff, trustees and Friends
- Book reviews

- New book lists
- List of scheduled events
- Local talent in essays, poetry or cartoons

It is much better to have a simple newsletter than none at all. Small libraries do not have to replicate the impressive, glossy, publishing-software look of urban newsletters. Certain features are highly recommended:

- Good quality paper
- Warm, friendly colors
- Logos
- Creative use of clip art
- Readable print
- Error-free copy
- Short paragraphs
- Column format if feasible

OTHER COMMUNITY NEWSLETTERS

While every library with a commitment to marketing should seriously consider a library newsletter, it is often possible to reach a target audience by running an appropriate library article in their newsletter. Community newsletters should be studied by library staff both for ideas and for possibilities for library coverage appropriate to the newsletter's mission. Some directors prefer to emphasize this strategy.

MARKETING THROUGH ELECTRONIC INFORMATION

USING ELECTRONIC INFORMATION

Electronic information has done more than anything else to give small libraries the ability to be effective information centers. The Internet gives access to huge amounts of information on a wide variety of topics. Once effective Internet access is established, this information is equally available to small libraries. Effective Internet access is more and more related to broadband Internet connections such as cable, ISDN, DSL, satellite and wireless. Really good information access is usually community-wide business.

But using this resource effectively involves a lot more than turning on a computer. A small library administrator has to build searching skills, learn what is available, learn how to assess the value of the information. Internet skills are sometimes neglected by rural librarians. They are perfectly capable of seeing the extraordinary value of electronic information but more immediate deadlines crowd out the time needed to build the necessary skills. Planning for the marketing of electronic information is one way to bring its value into focus and see how it will be important to the community.

In a slightly larger library, another staff member who enjoys the Internet can accept major responsibility for developing electronic reference skills and documenting the valuable resources that are located. In a small library, a librarian has no choice except to make electronic information a genuine priority and schedule some time blocks to pursue it. Classes and workshops offered by regional library systems and local colleges can be very helpful.

Sometimes self-training on the Internet remains impossible until a couple of well-chosen volunteers have been trained to assume more routine library duties.

MARKETING ELECTRONIC INFORMATION

If the library is to give effective, modern reference service to the community, the staff has to be able to use the resources of the Internet. But electronic information should also be part of the library's marketing program.

- Most automated catalogs can display Web links as well as books. Learning to include these is an excellent investment for the small library.
- Useful websites should be held in well-organized computer bookmarks so they can be found when they are needed.

- Just as the library can generate special interest book lists, the library can also share special interest websites with the public. However, these will have to be checked and updated regularly to retain their usefulness.
- Some libraries post important websites on the end panels of the stacks, making sure that they are close to the relevant subject area.
- A number of libraries have marketed the value of electronic information by offering classes to help community residents learn to use the Internet. These training programs have been much appreciated and have usually received effective publicity. They also showcase the skills of the library staff and volunteers.
- Dramatic improvements in the library's online information access are often considered newsworthy by the media, especially if it involves a partnership between the library and other community agencies. The professional searching skills of the library staff can be marketed at the same time.
- Interesting or especially useful websites can receive ongoing publicity through a regular feature in the library's newsletter.

LIBRARY HOMEPAGES

Every public library should have a library homepage, with an easy-to-remember URL (Web address) widely publicized to the community. Kansas has been a leader in developing library homepages, thanks in part to the work of John and Susan Howell.

The regional systems have personnel that can help small library staff build and maintain Web pages. The systems also offer regular workshops to build Web publishing skills.

Many small library directors have chosen to keep the library homepage simple. When it is confined to basic, fairly stable information about the library, it is easier to keep updated. A small library homepage should not have a lot of intrusive, active graphics that slow access. It is more effective if it has a logo or a couple good photographs. The library homepage should include:

- Library name
- Address
- Phone numbers
- Hours
- Basic services
- Brief history of the library
- Staff members
- Board members (only with their permission)

- Links to search engines/filtered search engines
- Links to ready-reference sites
- Links to local community sites such as local government, chamber of commerce, local tourism, local schools, etc.

A librarian who builds Web publishing skills and enjoys the field can maintain a more elaborate homepage that has more information and hot links to other sites. Some librarians have expanded library service by offering to maintain community homepages. This can be a very valuable service, but the library certainly deserves to have some effective publicity for it. The pages that are created and/or maintained by the library staff should include an acknowledgment to the library.

CONCLUSION

Electronic information will continue to grow as a critically important resource for small libraries. A library staff that chooses to make marketing a continuing priority will consider how to publicize electronic information, just as they give thought to a welcoming facility, a showcased collection or successful programs.

NOTES:

MEETING WITH GROUPS TO DESIGN CUSTOMER SERVICE

A large part of customized service for the modern public library comes down to simply talking to people as often as possible. Many of these communications take place informally. However, for planning and marketing purposes, a more formal approach is sometimes appropriate.

Sometimes when a library is trying to start a new service or when the staff genuinely has questions about the best way to offer a service, the library staff will arrange to meet with members of a target audience and learn more about their needs.

Since most people are very busy, it is important to avoid wasting their time. When the library staff meets with members of a target audience, they should be able to explain briefly and clearly what the library wants to do and what information they need to do it right.

Examples of meetings with a target audience might include:

- Meeting with story hour mothers during story hour to learn more about young children
- Meeting with genre readers to learn their favorite authors
(This can sometimes be done before or after an appropriate program.)
- Meeting with movie buffs to learn their favorite movies (This can also be done in partnership with a program.)
- Meeting with long term care residents to learn more about their information and recreation needs
- Meeting with high school students to learn more about their information and recreation needs
- Meeting with children's groups such as 4H and Scouts to learn more about their interests
- Meeting with community leaders to learn how the library can participate in community information access
- Meeting with a neighborhood association to learn more about their needs
- Meeting with Internet users to discuss public access stations and Internet use policy

Librarians often make the mistake of asking people what they want from the library. This is very likely to get a blank look or a comment that the library is doing great. Such comments are nice but not very helpful. It is often better to ask people to talk about their needs without being concerned about what the library can and cannot do.

Specific, yet open-ended, questions will stimulate the best discussion. The library staff and board are the experts on the library and they are the best ones to decide

how the library can help the target audience. But they can't make decisions in a vacuum. They need information about the needs of the target audience.

NOTES:

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING AS A MARKETING TOOL

A DIFFERENT KIND OF FUNDRAISING

Community fundraising as a marketing tool is slightly different from community fundraising that is intended to raise a large amount of money for a major project. If the library needs a capital campaign for a specific purpose, the library supporters should do their homework on individuals and agencies that have money to give and work out the best way to apply for their support.

Community fundraising as a marketing tool means that the library staff and supporters will work with a wide variety of community residents and ask them for a wide variety of support. In this kind of fundraising, the people are asked to give something that closely matches their own interests. They are asked to give at a modest level that does not cause them discomfort. While the librarian is genuinely delighted to have contributions, financial gain is not the only agenda. During this process, community residents are learning about the library and learning how it can connect with their own lives. This process can work in a variety of ways:

- Organizations can be asked to give materials or equipment that are related to their mission. Many organizations have a target audience that they care about and work for.
- Individuals can be asked to give the best books or videos on hobbies that they are widely known to have. These can include crafts, art, gardening, home decor, sports, collecting, pets, cars, movies, local history or other special interests.
- Individuals and organizations can be asked to give the best materials on the causes that they care about. These might include eldercare, childcare, social justice, education, economic development, voluntary simplicity or healthcare, including specific conditions.
- The library can make a Memorial Gifts Program a priority. There should be a brief, tactful, but effective publication that encourages people to select from a wide variety of gifts that have meaning for them, as well as value for the library. People should be encouraged to select materials on a topic that will be a genuine tribute to their loved ones. Publicity on this program can give examples, with permission, of touching and appropriate tributes.

When learning skills in this field, the librarian should keep in mind that success is not measured by financial contributions. If the person approached takes an interest in the library, successful marketing is being done. Also, the person may have useful information to share about publications, websites or resource people. The librarian may spot ways that the person can help the library with a service, a display or a program. If there is a friendly communication, with goodwill on both sides, it benefits

the library. If it isn't successful, the librarian should shrug and go on to something else.

The librarian should plan the presentation carefully, even if the potential donor is a good friend. If the person isn't a library user, the librarian should leave a flyer or brochure that gives important information about the library.

SHOULD FUNDRAISING BE A PRIORITY?

There is no consensus on the value of community fundraising. Some librarians and trustees feel strongly that the library is a public agency that should be supported with public funds. These people are not likely to feel comfortable with unstructured community fundraising and should probably concentrate on an alternative, such as building a strong Friends of the Library group.

A growing number of librarians and trustees feel that an excellent library results from a judicious blend of solid public support and widespread community support. Community fundraising builds public understanding and support for the library.

Just as a fit and healthy person is hungry for food, an excellent library is hungry for money. Many libraries have made fundraising a long-term priority and have seen their collections, programs and services improve as a result. Community fundraising is no substitute for adequate tax support but as a supplement to good public support, it can make a good library visibly better.

Many small library directors are more comfortable with this informal, ongoing, low-pressure style of fundraising, especially when they understand it as part of the library's marketing program. They appreciate it as a legitimate way to get to know a variety of community residents. But the rules of good fundraising still apply.

Community residents are not going to give money so the library can hire staff or pay the utility bill. If the library's fiscal problems are that serious, the board should be looking at increased public support, not fundraising.

People give for what they care about, of course. But they also give when they are asked to give. If the library doesn't ask, another agency will. Many people don't realize that the library needs and wants material on their special interest.

People make repeated gifts when they believe that their giving has been valued and appreciated. Even wealthy people will not continue to give if they don't receive effective appreciation.

SAYING THANK YOU

Fifty percent of a successful program of community support lies in saying “thank you.” A library’s style of appreciation is a very big part of its total marketing program. Many libraries that have unsuccessful track records in community fundraising also have no reputation for being appreciative.

Every gift to the library should be acknowledged. The thank-you should be appropriate and personal. Form letters are not appropriate, especially in a small community. Food and flowers are both effective, inexpensive ways to express warm appreciation.

Every donor should be thanked privately. Most donors of larger gifts welcome public acknowledgment but some do not. It is wise to check with them before taking them by surprise.

The donor of a large gift must be thanked several times in several different ways, not mechanically, but creatively. It can be impressive when the staff, the board and the Friends are all moved to express their appreciation of meaningful help for the library.

If the library acquires a number of donors who give significant amounts of money OR time, it is often effective to host a biennial reception to show the library’s appreciation. Large libraries often do this and they can spend money on food and gifts that is not practical for small libraries. But a small library can host a festive party that is designed to make the donors feel that they are important to the library and the community.

Many small library directors, well aware of the importance of appreciation, have wisely delayed the start of a fundraising program until other major projects were completed. But at any time, fundraising is a project that needs effective assistance. Library supporters who are interested in fundraising might want to schedule a workshop on the topic.

A PATIENT, PERMANENT PROGRAM

A capital campaign to finance a major project is an all-out effort to achieve a goal. It has to have realistic timelines and it has to focus on those who have real money.

But if it is acceptable to the library’s service philosophy, community fundraising can become a permanent part of the small library’s marketing program. The library works with one person and one organization at a time, supported by effective publications. It is a leisurely, long-term investment that nets both social capital and fiscal strength.

Planning, patience and perseverance have been called the three watchwords of community fundraising.

- Planning is essential to document the needs, draft the strategies, organize the acknowledgments.
- Patience is necessary to build a growing cadre of people who actively support the library with financial contributions or contributed services. A library cannot build a climate of community support overnight.
- Perseverance is also necessary for success in this field. Far too many librarians and trustees have been discouraged by setbacks that could have been regarded as valuable training. Far too many have quit before their efforts could bring benefit to a genuinely loved library.

PART FIVE

PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP

INTRODUCTION

Small library directors are sometimes skeptical about investment in marketing because they know that their time is already over-committed and their budget already over-strained. They know that their library will never have a lavish budget for marketing and public relations. As long as they continue to think in terms of workload instead of partnering, this will remain an obstacle.

The only way to compensate for limited time and money is to find people who can help or, to use the jargon, to make effective use of human resources. In spite of the exponential growth of technology, it is the human skills that are most likely to result in a successful library administration.

A good public library wants to serve as many people as possible as well as possible. But it is also true that a good public library's service area is full of people who can help the library. The challenge is finding out who these people are and enlisting their support.

STAFF

A good staff is the most critical element to a public library's success. A good staff is one where the staff members are competent, committed, friendly and willing to learn.

Staff members in a small or mid-sized public library need to go outside their comfort zones and learn new skills if they are going to be useful to the library. But it is also true that staff members do their best work when they are doing work that they enjoy.

Often when a library director is struggling to find the time and money to make marketing and public relations a higher priority, there is a staff member who has skills that could help. These skills might include:

- Public speaking
- Storytelling
- A talent for oral or written book reviews

- A flair for designing inexpensive brochures, flyers and posters
- Website design
- Creative ways to thank people
- Innovative ideas on displays or programming
- A natural interest in studying the community
- Bookkeeping for special projects
- A special talent for memorial book programs, adopt-a-book programs, adopt-a-video programs, reliable magazine donations
- A special talent for outreach programs

A director who knows the staff members and has their respect has a much better chance of both meeting their needs and of finding out how they can best help the library. Directors of small libraries have an advantage because they work side by side with their staff in effective partnership. But they are also the most likely to neglect such useful tools as staff meetings, weekly checks on projects and quarterly evaluations.

The more the staff knows about the library's needs, the more likely they are to be able to meet them.

VOLUNTEERS

Directors of libraries of all sizes are finding that it is impossible to offer excellent library service without using volunteers. There are not enough paid staff members and the paid staff members simply do not have the time and skills for everything that needs to be done.

A library director who knows the community and gets involved in community activities has a much better chance of finding the people who have skills that can help the library.

Community residents who understand the library's needs are much more likely to offer their services to the library. This is why presentations to community groups and media coverage of library issues are so critically important.

Volunteers often help with a variety of special projects, as trustees, Friends or volunteer staff. In a very small library, a volunteer who can be trusted to handle circulation with both competence and warm friendliness is a priceless asset. Such a person can free the director to work with other projects or to partner with other community agencies.

Volunteers are not free. They require management, friendly communication and training. For a small library, it is far better to have one or two good volunteers that the library staff can partner with than half a dozen who cause more problems than they solve.

TRUSTEES

The more the trustees understand about the library's current needs, the better they are able to help. They often have skills, knowledge and abilities that can help the library.

Trustees know community leaders and can enlist their support for specific projects. Often trustees *are* community leaders and they can become very effective advocates for the library.

Trustees are volunteers. They have an obligation to attend board meetings and be knowledgeable about the library's current issues. But if they take on extra work for the library, this work should be something they believe in and enjoy. It is part of the library administrator's responsibilities to help the trustees enjoy their tenure as library board members.

Library board members in smaller communities often do very valuable work for the library. But there is a danger that they will begin to micro-manage the library's affairs and this can be very destructive. Staff supervision and daily library operation are the responsibilities of a competent director.

FRIENDS

A good Friends of the Library group can help the library in a more structured way than scattered volunteers. Friends groups have more freedom to handle the funds gathered in community fundraising. They can handle some of their own organizational dynamics and implement some of their own projects.

But a Friends of the Library group can only be effective if they have really important work to do. Many Friends groups have foundered because there was nothing going on that really held citizen interest in the library.

Building and renovation programs have traditionally been the most successful project for Friends of the Library groups. Proposed buildings, at least when the dream is properly marketed, are visible, beautiful, exciting and badly needed.

But there are many other things that Friends groups can be excited about when the need is a real one for the library. A Friends group can work for a really first class children's department that has new books, videos, toys, play furniture, imaginative reading areas and colorful artwork. Children's services are often something the public does understand and support.

A Friends group can work to fund extra copies of bestsellers so that the library's reserve list is not so over-burdened. Nothing discourages an avid reader more than a long wait for a popular new book.

A Friends group can work to build a really good video collection that includes both nonfiction and popular videos. While many smaller libraries have video collections, it is hard to fund a really good collection. Yet this is a hugely popular library service. A good video collection can raise the library's total circulation and bring people who do not enjoy recreational reading into the library. Such a project needs to be marketed to the public from the time it is an exciting idea clear through the time it is an established and popular service.

A Friends group can work to build a really good audiobook collection. This could be selected as a priority in a community that has a high population of commuters who have large amounts of windshield time and also a large population of older people who find it tiring to read normal print. But audiobooks are a weapon against any dull, routine work and can be marketed that way. It is hard to justify a large audiobook collection in a small library budget. Yet if it can be funded, it can be a very popular and successful service.

Friends are often involved in the success of a single library program that has become a cherished community tradition that people look forward to every year. This can be anything from a garden tour, to a Christmas music program, to a lavish book sale/party. Such programs are priceless image builders that give library greater visibility and a highly attractive identity in the town.

Friends are sometimes involved in helping the library expand electronic information access. This usually happens because significant Friends have computer technology as a major interest. In other communities, library directors have found that library technology is a more private endeavor of the staff and the board and public support is given to other projects. It is, like so many other things, a judgement call based on knowledge of the community.

Note: Libraries that are interested in starting a Friends of the Library should contact their local system or the Friends of Kansas Libraries Board. FOKL has a web site. The URL is <http://www.skyways.org/KSL/fokl/>.

ACTIVE LIBRARY USERS

Active library users, regardless of which library materials they are using, are a resource that should not be neglected. Library users are usually good library supporters and often willing to help if they are asked. But it is hard to know what to ask for without getting to know the person.

Often the library user's profession can give a clue as to what they might be qualified to do for the library. Or their patterns of library use might indicate work that they would enjoy:

- An avid gardener who consumes every garden and landscape book the library owns might enjoy helping with the library grounds or contributing lovely floral arrangements.
- An avid mystery reader who is also a lively and articulate extrovert might enjoy coordinating a mystery readers' group or posting reviews of current mysteries.
- Mystery or western buffs are often willing to contribute to building their favorite collections.
- A young adult with a bottomless appetite for fantasy might be delighted to be asked for reviews or a program. Or they may have a collection of paperbacks they would donate to the library.
- A person famous for their love of dogs, cats or horses might be able to present a fascinating animal program for either children or adults. Or they might help organize a pet show event or a blessing of the animals.

Oddly enough, active library users are a frequently neglected resource. They are so absolutely central to the library's success that they are taken for granted. Many of them have not contributed to the library, mainly because they have never been asked. But the library staff in a small library often has the chance to get to know these people. The library director may know at least part of them through other community activities. Essential as consumers of library services, they can also be cultivated as contributors.

COMPUTER BUFFS

In every Kansas library, the director and staff have to learn how to manage effective access to both print and electronic information. There is no other way to have an effective modern library.

But how much the library staff members actively enjoy computers and technology is partly a matter of chance. If part of them do, the library will benefit immensely from their involvement. If they don't, they still have to learn.

However, every community has individuals who love computer technology. They love searching the Internet, or they love website design, or they love desktop publishing, or they love email. They come in all ages. When they can be found and recruited, these people are worth their weight in gold. There are a number of different ways that they might choose to help the library.

- They can do extra searching on difficult reference questions.
- They can serve as tutors for library staff or volunteers trying to learn new skills.
- They can help the library staff solve minor computer problems.
- They can help new Internet users set up e-mail.
- They can participate in classes to help members of the community learn computer skills.
- They can help maintain the library's website.
- They can produce polished, attractive marketing materials.

Computer buffs can help the library staff become as technically proficient as they must be for effective library service. But they can also extend the resources of the library staff beyond what they would have the time and talents to accomplish by themselves.

LOCAL ARTISTS

Local artists, photographers, master gardeners, quilters and other craftsmen are often delighted to have displays or programs in the library.

While they should not be repeatedly asked to donate services that they depend on for their livelihood, they are often willing to give advice in their field and they are often willing to help with a specific library project in exchange for some free publicity for their business. Or they may give the library a competitive price for their services.

SPEAKERS

Excellent speakers can be recruited by the library. This is easiest to do if they are members of the library board or members of the Friends of the Library. And they certainly deserve to be courted for both groups. But they can also be recruited as a volunteer just for their speaking abilities.

Most people who are really dynamic speakers are well aware of the fact and proud of it. If they are not overscheduled, they may be willing to learn about the public library and the library issues and use their special talent to help the library with a specific project, such as a building program.

It is often easier for a good speaker to learn the facts and communicate them than it is for a poor or nervous speaker to communicate what they know very well. A two-step process can actually be more effective if time and care are invested in it.

Clubs and organizations are often in need of programs. The library is always in need of more visibility. If the library director or a board member enjoys public speaking and does it well, the word can be spread, to the benefit of both the library and the community. Once a track record is established, the individual may find himself with more speaking engagements than he really wants. But effective speakers on current library issues are a vital resource to library marketing campaigns.

FUNDRAISERS

Some communities have professional fundraisers who may be willing to share their expertise with the library, although they seldom have a lot of time to spare for actual projects.

Other communities have people who have demonstrated skills that are essential to community fundraising. These include persuasive speaking, effective publicity, the ability to organize and motivate people, bookkeeping and reporting skills and a talent for sincere and creative thank-yous. These people can help raise money or they can help win a bond issue.

Community fundraising is an excellent marketing tool. Asking people for money is a fine opportunity to make them aware of the library's needs and the library's problems AND what the library has to offer.

Many educated community leaders still have no real knowledge of the costs of books, magazines, videos, audiobooks, CD-Roms or computer software. Small towns don't usually have the lavish bookstores that attract active readers and make them all too sadly aware of the cost of books. People who feel the library's financial pain are much more likely to turn into library supporters even if they aren't in a position to contribute large sums of money.

MEMBERS OF THE TARGET AUDIENCE

If you want to do something for a target audience, it makes sense to talk to people who are members of that audience. It makes sense but it is inexplicably neglected over and over again. Librarians who want to serve elders don't talk to senior citizens. Librarians flounder helplessly trying to serve young adults because they don't know any real teenagers. Librarians trying to plan for ADA compliance don't talk to those who have disabilities or fragile health. Librarians who want to serve ethnic groups or disadvantaged populations find it hard to start because they haven't found a way to make contact with that part of the community.

Librarians who don't like mysteries or westerns are buying mysteries and westerns for people who love them. A few avid genre readers can communicate a great deal of information, as well as their lively enjoyment.

If the library staff and board want to serve people well, those people have to be understood, as people rather than statistics. The staff can meet with individuals or groups, formally or informally, at the library or elsewhere in the community. It is easiest to consult with people the library staff has come to know, either because they are in the library or because of other community groups and activities.

It is much harder to talk to people who are not active public library users. If the library staff has no natural contacts within a group the library wants to serve, it may be necessary to search for people who can act as liaisons. These might include respected ministers, teachers, physicians, employers, social service people or local celebrities.

CONCLUSION

The public library is there to serve the entire community. The people of the community are of supreme importance to the public library. But many public library directors have thought only in terms of how they can offer the best possible service **TO** the community. They have not given enough thought or planning to the incredible richness that can come to the library **FROM** the community.

When the library staff and board look at the community residents as both consumers and contributors, the library's ability to offer excellent service is greatly extended.

The public library is a user-friendly public agency. It belongs to the people who choose to use it in a very personal way. They know that an excellent public library makes the community a better place to live. And many of them will be genuinely pleased if they can help.