

Marketing of Library Services in Europe

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Abstract

This paper, based on a few articles written by specialists from different European countries, contains an objective analysis of the way the marketing techniques and instruments are implemented in libraries. In Europe, we can see that library marketing is present in different forms; in some countries it is more intense and in others it is less strong. We will surprisingly discover manifestations of marketing in unexpected places, in less developed countries, with few financial possibilities but opened to this domain and oriented towards the users, and in more developed but traditional countries, marketing techniques are in an incipient phase. Unfortunately, libraries are a long way ahead from this perspective.

Keywords: *Marketing, Library Marketing, Promotion.*

The association between marketing and libraries may seem bizarre at first. Indeed, marketing is an economic discipline whose first purpose is increasing sales and obtaining profit and the library is an info documentary, cultural, non-profit structure; but modern marketing concentrates on clients from all areas aiming to meet their needs with the services they offer, this also being the fundamental objective of library marketing.

Although it develops internationally and specialists share their experiences in an increasing number of articles, the marketing of library services is not applied, with few exceptions and very poorly, in library strategies.

We are trying to argument this idea by presenting the experiences of a few developed or less developed European countries in the field of library marketing.

The library marketing in **Denmark**, one of the most developed countries in Europe in the librarianship field, has suffered lately major changes determined mostly by the 2000 law of public libraries. One of the main issues of this law was that all public libraries have to offer to all citizens free access to the Internet. Also, this law encourages libraries to develop their musical collection and to buy other types of documents, besides the traditional ones. Another result of this law is the "www.bibliotek.dk" service, a data base which offers to every citizen online access to the collections of any public or university library in the country and also assures the right to borrow free documents from any library. This determined a fast development of the interlibrary lend system as its activity doubled in just a few years. This is an example of the way the new technology can lead to the development of the users' behaviour. Also, in Denmark there is a long and powerful tradition when it comes to cooperation.

Another service, similar to the previous one is "www.deff.dk". This service offers researchers, professors and students access to research materials and to sources of information no matter the institution they belong to.

These services have changed very much the relationship between libraries and users. The integration of libraries in the communities they work has been done through the web pages and other Internet services.

The success of the Danish librarianship is a consequence of the active implication of the authorities in the development of the public libraries' system. Denmark is the country with probably the best finance system in this field.

In public libraries the medium spending for each citizen is approximately 75 Euros per year, and the rate of utility is a very good one, as every year more than 50% of the population uses the services of these institutions. The purchases of books decreased a little because of the investments in other types of information supports.

In conclusion, the development of public libraries was possible thanks to the political and administrative support but also to the aggressive campaigns of service promotions, actions that changed the role of libraries from points of access to information, into reference services that offer assistance to the users.

In **Norway**, marketing is not a preoccupation for libraries. This is why they are not visible in the communities they serve and the role of the librarian is not sufficiently appreciated. The solution for all these problems can be a law that includes all types of libraries (this law has been in project for a few years) and also the launching of a series of aggressive promotion campaigns.

Although promotion campaigns are missing, recent statistics show that the index of library use grew in the last years. This is due to the fact that library services have been improved, and the Internet was used as an instrument to promote these institutions. On the other hand, the budgets allocated for public libraries remained unchanged, as they are not in concordance with cost increases, especially of books or other materials, and with salary growth.

At the moment, almost all public libraries give to the public free Internet access and an important segment of the users is represented by children. Many libraries even created special web pages for this particular category of users. For the last two years, the Norwegian government started a series of campaigns in which libraries were also involved, to increase the children's interest for reading.

Lately, Norwegian authorities launched different actions to change the existing situation. So, under the control of the Ministry of Culture it was established The Archive Library and Museum Authority (ABM-utvikling) for supporting the sub ordered structures; unfortunately, until now, the authority was not nationally visible. On the other hand, public libraries are permanently preoccupied by the promotion of services and they do this in a professional manner, especially through local media.

Starting with 1995 the Norwegian Library Association started a campaign to improve the situation of school libraries. This was the biggest and the most expensive campaign sustained in the last years. After this, some school libraries received more resources but they seem to be insufficient for changing their image and for justifying the existence of these institutions in the community.

Sissel Nilsen shows that in northern countries a committee encourages every year the celebration of "library week" through different programs and activities held in schools or public libraries.

Concerning the training of future librarians, schools concentrate strictly on classical librarianship disciplines and less on new areas as public relations, communication or marketing.

Libraries in **Spain** had in mind two objectives: the first one was to attract readers through promotional activities, and the second one to launch investigations on the users of public and university libraries without taking in consideration the potential users.

In the last years, new services have been planned but without having the base of scientific studies on users, and more likely on the empirical knowledge of them. Users-based studies look mostly for their satisfaction in relation with the evaluation of the libraries and less with their needs. These

kinds of studies were made by many university libraries, as a general evaluation of the different faculties.

Although these services were a success, even with few resources, to know your users is essential. Among the services mentioned there are also the “bibliopools” and the “bibliobeaches” (dedicated to tourists), the “bibliosubway” (for those who use this kind of transportation) or the “bibliomarket” in Barcelona and Salamanca (for housewives).

Starting with the 70’s the Ministry of Education developed campaigns to promote reading based mostly on individuals and less on libraries as cultural institutions. These campaigns used attractive slogans like: “If you read, they read!” (They are referring to the example parents can give to children), “Live by reading” (this campaign refers to reading as daily practice, necessary in all aspects of life), “Feed your mind, you, those who can evolve!” (In this campaign images with fazes of evolution from monkey to man were used). At the beginning, the characteristic of these campaigns was the ironic aggressiveness and the association of some negative images, then reading was associated with positive aspects like the joy of reading, intellectual development, opening for unexpected possibilities.

In the last couple of years, the Ministry of Culture organized these kinds of campaigns like “If you read they read” or “Public libraries: come, watch, listen, navigate and read!” campaigns that emphasized that these services are free. One of the first campaign oriented towards libraries had the slogan: “We have a million books” and it was launched by the Network of Public Libraries in Barcelona. This campaign managed to attract the public’s attention on libraries.

The absence of specialists, the limited financial and material resources but also a kind of aversion towards using commercial techniques, determined the Spanish librarians to avoid using marketing methods. However, publicity and public relations were accepted, instruments used in promoting equal access to information, free access to documents or to the new information technologies. Most of these kinds of campaigns are addressed exclusively to children and young people.

In the libraries from **Finland**, the concept of cultural marketing is unclear and its definition still causes confusions. However, certain specific marketing concepts have been applied even if they weren’t always aware of its affiliation. But the Finish libraries succeeded to offer services oriented mostly towards the user, starting from a specific principle to northern countries that sustains everyone’s right to information.

Starting with the 70’s in libraries and information services some marketing concepts have been adapted and activities referring to communication and public relations have started to develop influenced mostly by the experience of Swedish libraries. At that moment, the first

librarian specialized in public relations (with a full job) was chosen in Espoo City Library. The example was followed by Helsinki Public Library and by libraries from other cities like: Tamporo, Turku, Lahti, and Jyväskylä. Starting with 1990, because of the economic crises that affected all structures, including libraries, they no longer afforded specialists in marketing; so, at present only some of these institutions have specialized staff dedicated to these activities.

Generally, in this country libraries have a special reputation as they have high quality web sites. The Finish Library Association is always involved in these institutions' problems, they take care of the staff's training, they organize seminars, some having marketing as their theme, and "Kirjastolehti", the monthly journal published by the association, had in 2004 a special issue on library marketing.

A specific characteristic to Finish libraries is that anyone can use their resources and services without being submitted to any restriction or discrimination. Although, users are generally satisfied, they say that much more is needed to be truly content. Unfortunately, even here, a few libraries start surveys to discover the users' needs.

Most libraries do not collect fees from regular users; still, private companies or firms have to pay for their services.

In what concerns the practical application of marketing in the library, Hikka Orava, the director of the Public Library in Salo, shows that marketing as it is usually perceived through the set of developed techniques in the private area, says that in a country as Finland where literature is 100% virtual, where the government appreciates and supports libraries, if something does not work, it means that it is because of the insufficient organization and administration.

In **France**, the introduction of marketing techniques and methods in libraries and documentation services is a relatively new and slow process. The professionals in this area showed, in a traditional way, that more attention to the technical aspects and the relationship with the user occupies a secondary place. Marketing was considered only from its commercial dimension perspective; that is why a certain tendency of resistance is present among the public services' professionals towards the methods of the economic area.

Although worldwide there is an increasing interest for this subject, in France the number of articles about documentary marketing is very small. Presently, there are only three books published, almost 20 articles in specialized journals and a few reports. Published during a decade these three books are: "*Marketing des bibliothèques et des centres de documentation*" (1992), by Jean-Michel Salaün (this book can also be found in our libraries since the date it was released), "*Le marketing des services d'information: Pour un usage de l'information documentaire*" (1994), by Eric Sutter and

“Strategie marketing des services d'information, bibliothèques et centres de documentation”, by Florence Muet and Jean-Michel Salaün.

The courses for training information specialists put marketing again in a secondary position. INTD (Institut National des Techniques Documentaires) offers a course of only ten hours for this subject, besides other courses about the other aspects of management. Still, we have to mention ENSSIB's (Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Sciences de l'Information et des Bibliothèques) initiative in accomplishing an online training which refers to the marketing strategy and it is addressed to library and documentary services directors (visit www.enssib.fr).

Although only 11% of information professionals consider marketing essential for information services to function, in 2004 a new edition of „Euroreferentiel des competences” was published, in which marketing is recognized as a specific competence.

Marketing knew in these conditions a marginal development. Many professionals, librarians and archivists are tented to consider marketing an instrument that they will use only in extreme situations. But if everything goes well marketing is no longer seen as an interesting domain.

But some info documentary structures use actively documentation marketing. For example, the city library from Lyon recently hired a marketing and development director. INIST (Institute National de l'Information Scientifique et Technique) has oriented for some time towards management marketing.

Unfortunately, in France a conservative country, there are many steps to be taken for an efficient implementation of marketing in libraries.

In **Croatia**, the marketing of library services is in an incipient phase. An example of the way in which it was applied is the City Library in Rijeka. This is a public library; the cultural, educational, social and informational centre of the city has been nationally organizing for a few years, under the Teens for Teens project, workshops on different themes, with the purpose of attracting young people towards the library. In this way, libraries have the possibility to participate in adolescents' life, in the process of developing and becoming mature.

The characteristic of these workshops is that they were created, prepared and presented exactly by young volunteers. The content and structure of these workshops vary and they take place regularly, once a week, at two weeks or once a month. The advantage of this project is that it does not require substantial financial resources and it can take place anywhere.

Since this project started, in the fall of 1998, approximately 4000 young people have participated in these activities. The group of volunteers from Rijeka City Library has a special way of presenting their work: as library ambassadors, they visit other libraries in the country and abroad helping other young users to develop their creativity.

Workshops have in view: encouraging reading and creativity, promoting democracy, social and rhetorical skills, promoting English and also exchanging information and perceiving the Internet as a rich source of information. The Teen Tee Time program was an informal way of meetings and discussions, especially, in English and it was also supported by the British Embassy. The British ambassador in Croatia, Nicholas Jarrod, donated to the library a valuable collection of books for young people.

The same group launched another project, "Bookmarker", a magazine that promotes reading among adolescents.

Participation in the workshops is free. They are also organized outside the library: in schools, other libraries in the country or abroad, national book fairs or science festivals.

This project was very successful as it was nominated in 2004 for the Astrid Lindgren award. In 2002 the manager of this project won *Young Librarian's National Award* and in 2003 it received the *Annual City Award*.

Through these kinds of projects and through a more efficient cooperation with the local information media, sponsors and a number of specialists, the library became more visible and strengthened its position inside the community.

In **Romania**, as in other countries, there are many obstacles in the way of implementing practices and techniques of marketing in libraries. Many of these obstacles are represented by the old library problems: the financial crises, the absence of professionals (mostly in the marketing and management field), certain mentalities, behaviors and prejudices, the lack of conception, the confusing actions, the institutional isolation and the traditional inertia. Besides all these, we add the administrative barriers and the authorities' lack of involvement that does not encourage or reward the performances of the cultural and info documentary structures.

But lately, the Romanian librarianship knows some positive changes. For example, in the legislative area, the new library law succeeded in putting order in the post revolution chaos and the Government Order number 84/1998 partially solved the financial crises allowing university libraries to use the incomes obtained from individual activities.

A positive example of adapting to the new changes is the Lucian Blaga Central University Library in Cluj, one of the largest libraries in Central Europe which succeeded in supplementing its financial resources by publishing and selling the *Philobiblon* periodical. This publication was conceived for international library exchanges which are also the reason the journal is published in English. Before its publication a series of studies and analyses were made in order to situate the journal near other publications of great libraries as *Bodleian Library Record*, *Harvard Library Bulletin*, *Konygotira*.

After it was promoted in the country but also abroad, the journal brought a profit of 200% for the library. This made possible the acquisition of some valuable and indispensable publications: books and periodicals which otherwise could not have been possible because of the lack of financial resources. Also, a symbolic capital of image was obtained.

In 1998 the *Philobiblon: Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria Anthology (I)* was published in Romanian. Although the volume was well received it did not sell because of some moral obstacle and the lack of knowledge of the intern market. In 2000, a bibliographic data base was sold generating a profit of 120 million lei. In the same year, the editors of *Philobiblon* published a new volume: *The management of Future-Libraries and Archives*, which brought a profit of 25%.

In 2004, a second volume from the *Philobiblon Anthology* was published, *Hermeneutica Bibliothecaria (II)*, sustained also by a huge promotion action.

Ms. Melinda Bukkei from Lucian Blaga Central University Library considers that although some progress was made, there are certain problems in this institution, that is why the quality standards of the offered services have to rise, also an information desk has to be established for our new users, visitors, partners, for every person that needs information about our services or about the library and also a better promotion through the library presentation at the beginning of every university year.

As it was observed in Europe marketing has different forms, in some countries more intense, in others less intense. Its applicability does not depend only on a country's financial resources. In some countries this area has only been studied in theory and in others the marketing practices are in an incipient phase. Libraries have a long way to cross from this point of view. We can learn from their experiences, failures and successes. The most efficient marketing for the library is represented by satisfied users.

The emergence of libraries from the traditional inertia is one of the factors that will allow libraries' survival in the information society. The library has to become a producer of information and cultural competitive products on the profile market, it has to welcome the spiritual needs of its real and potential users, to seduce its clients with new attractions, to diversify its action chromatics, to be attractive and dynamic and its publicity has to be "aggressive" and consistent.

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