Praise for *Engaging your Community through Active Strategic Marketing*

'An effective marketing strategy is vital in enabling library and information services to enhance their impact and engage existing and potential audiences. *Engaging your Community through Active Strategic Marketing* provides a comprehensive introduction on how to develop and implement your strategy, drawing on a useful collection of tips, tools and techniques. This practical guide is an invaluable resource for any information professional intending to measure and demonstrate the value of their marketing activities.'
Doug Knock, Library & Knowledge Services Manager, King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

'In an age where libraries are competing with a wide range of entertainment and information facilities, a solid and strategic marketing plan can do wonders to engage existing clients and attract potential ones. This book is an accessible continuation of Terry's professional training methods in marketing specifically for libraries; he helps the library professional set up an effective marketing plan which moves away from the perhaps obvious system-based promotion style, to a targeted and individualistic method. I highly recommend this book to all library professionals who wish to give their library that extra edge.'
Cheryl Falzon, National Librarian and CEO, Malta Libraries

'As libraries respond to the disruption and challenge of technological change, the COVID-19 pandemic and financial uncertainty, *Engaging your Community through Active Strategic Marketing* stands as an invaluable resource.
Kendrick speaks to a bold ambition for libraries that roots its success in practical actions, with clear achievable outcomes. *Engaging Your Community* is a timely reminder that the services and institutions that endure are created in partnership with the communities they serve, placing community engagement and effective marketing at the heart of strategic planning for libraries. Alongside an accessible overview of key topics, *Engaging Your Community* includes suggestions for activities that will enable library and information professionals to build the "ongoing, engaging, meaningful conversations" with our communities that are essential to the future prosperity of our profession.'
Ed Jewell, Chief Librarian, Jersey Public Library

'Terry's book *Engaging your Community through Active Strategic Marketing* is a great guide of step-by-step actions you can take to promote your library service in an increasingly crowded space for grabbing your users' attention. I began using Terry's tools and techniques after attending one of his workshops on library marketing a few years ago, and the cut-through we have achieved with our library marketing has been remarkable. This book will be a great asset to librarians and information professionals across all sectors who want to demonstrate their value in today's digital environment.'
Ella Hassett, Librarian, Arup

'Are you concerned that despite all your best efforts your library is still the "best kept secret?" Are you concerned that your library's marketing activities are not having the desired impact? Then Terry Kendrick's *Engaging your Community through Active Strategic Marketing* is just the book for you.

This sharply written and engaging book is full of useful tips and practical activities that will help you connect with your users, hone your library's marketing message and ultimately take your library's marketing to the next level, building and engaging your community along the way.'
Martin O'Connor, Academic Librarian, University College Cork Library, blogger for *Libfocus* and Chair of CONUL Communications and Outreach Group

Engaging your Community through Active Strategic Marketing

Engaging your Community through Active Strategic Marketing:

A practical guide for librarians and information professionals

Terry Kendrick

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Introduction

Perhaps more than ever before, library staff – regardless of sector – seek to engage with those who will shape the library's destiny. Users should be engaged when they visit libraries. Library staff need to understand why some people do not use libraries and draw them closer. Stakeholders such as administrators of funding bodies need to be engaged to ensure alignment of library values, vision and mission with the wider organisational goals.

This book, based on modern engagement and marketing planning principles, has been written as a practical guide to support staff in libraries of all kinds in their efforts to encourage users, non-users and other stakeholders to engage with library services.

Successful engagement arises from a well-managed combination of outreach, advocacy, campaign marketing, user experience, customer service and external relations. Strategic marketing planning offers a process to manage and deliver the major benefits of each of these in search of authentic and sustained engagement with library communities, whether geographical or communities of need or interest.

Although some of the terminology characteristic of these disciplines has been retained, the overriding concern has been to use easy to understand language and avoid jargon wherever possible. Similarly, where there are models that simplify some of the concepts discussed in the book, they have been adapted to have specific relevance for libraries.

Examples given in this book are drawn mainly from public, academic, health services and corporate libraries to explain and inspire.

Terry Kendrick
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The need for a professional approach to engagement

We live in a busy, noisy, unpredictable world where even our cherished beliefs and values are under review. From the big issues around how we should be governed, through social issues of support and fairness, to the less fundamental, but still disorienting, shift in the patterns of how and where we buy things, we are living through a period of seemingly accelerating change.

Libraries are inevitably caught up in this swirling change and their values are being challenged in all sectors for relevance, need and value for money. There is an imperative for librarians to engage deeply with their users, potential users and other stakeholders, encouraging them to use library services. These are exciting times for libraries with this deeper engagement revealing new opportunities and highlighting the continuing relevance of existing well-established library values and services.

Defining engagement and strategic marketing

Engagement can be defined and measured by how involved people are with the library and how sustained their connections are over time. The process of attracting users, potential users and other stakeholders involves leading them into an ongoing relationship with the library. This may begin by encouraging library use but can, as engagement deepens, develop into co-creation of services.

Sometimes this involvement and connection arises naturally due to an apparent good fit and understanding between the library ethos and what the users, potential users and other stakeholders want, and expect, from library service. At other times potential fit should be investigated, understood, developed, managed and monitored. This book suggests practical approaches to engagement through strategic marketing planning.

Although engagement is most frequently discussed in relation to public, academic and health library services it is a topic that is key to successful development and delivery of services in all library and information sectors. The following chapters outline practical tools and techniques to ensure successful, meaningful, engagement regardless of library context. Underpinning the exploration of strategic marketing for engagement will be a nod to the related concepts of outreach, advocacy, campaign marketing, customer service and external relations. All of these, if well managed, contribute to the potential for deep engagement.

For the purpose of this book strategic marketing in a library and information context can be defined as:

> An ongoing, engaging, meaningful conversation with users, potential users and other stakeholders to understand the appropriate configuration of valuable products and services, which can then be moulded into mutually beneficial segment-specific winning offers that are subsequently communicated, implemented, evaluated and monitored.

Although long, it is worth memorising this definition to use as a check for your marketing activities. If your project or campaign is not addressing at least one part of this definition (and preferably several) then it is unlikely that you will be encouraging engagement or, indeed, undertaking strategic marketing.

The definition stresses the importance of relationship marketing and an overall strategic planning process while clearly including significant items from related concepts such as outreach (e.g. the ongoing engaging conversations), advocacy (e.g. communicating and championing the value of the library offer), customer service (e.g. effective, careful, sensitive delivery of offers to provide a positive and consistent user experience) and external relations (e.g. the importance of wider stakeholder groups).

Tactical marketing activities and campaigns should be based on winning offers that are more attractive than relevant competitive offers, relevant, timely and engaging. The library should not be seen as simply the source of 'one more message'. Sitting back on a wonderful product with a hope that someone – key funding stakeholders and potential library users – will spot your wonderfulness is not likely to be an effective development strategy. In our noisy times the fight for attention is severe and brutal. Being the best kept secret is dangerous positioning. The library offer clearly needs to be attractive, not merely well stated and communicated.

Before moving on to discuss the tools and techniques of effective marketing for engagement in libraries let us take a moment to recognise why this is so

important a topic today. An increased professionalism around engagement and strategic marketing is required for many reasons, which are discussed below:

- Library and information services are often losing market share.
- Library and information units need to be relevant to a significant proportion of their potential user population.
- Effective marketing strategy is no longer simply about publicising and promoting existing services.
- Sometimes users cannot articulate their future needs well or have a limited understanding of library capabilities.
- Those who fund libraries need to know how well funds allocated to the library are being used to meet the information or leisure requirements of its clientele.
- Brand and image are important to many.
- Some library and information units have been disappointed by the outcomes of their seemingly ineffective marketing activities.
- Library and information units must satisfy users otherwise there is very little chance of those users continuing to use and truly engage with them.

Library and information services are, in most sectors and contexts, in fast growing information and leisure markets and losing market share. The services and products that library and information units offer are increasingly recognised as important by a range of people. At the same time there are ever more alternative – often seemingly more engaging – ways to access relevant services and products, each with its own distinctive approach. This is a fundamental double issue that must be addressed – library and information services should be experiencing a very successful era but this is not always the case. An increased professionalism to analyse marketplaces and develop effective general and marketing strategies is required if an appropriate share of this marketplace is to be engaged. Strategic marketing planning is an important tool to address this issue.

Library and information units should be relevant to a significant proportion of a library's potential user population. Library and information managers need to present their services as an indispensable, or at least very valuable, part of the daily life of their users. Where services are publicly funded, such as public libraries, a plausible and evidenced claim must be made that users' lives are constantly improved at least in line with current local authority priorities. A deep understanding of users and the value provided for them is part of the goal and outcome for strategic marketing. Empathy and engagement are key drivers of success.

Given the changing nature of our uncertain environments, effective marketing strategy is no longer simply about publicising and promoting existing services. It is vital to know when it is time to innovate to ensure continued relevance. Innovation requires feedback from engaged users and other stakeholders. Well-designed marketing planning activities are an important source of this detailed, structured and regular feedback. Innovation is not simply about asking users what they want.

Innovators recognise that sometimes users cannot articulate their future needs well or they simply articulate them in the context of their, possibly limited, understanding of library capabilities. Those managing strategic marketing look at a whole range of scenarios and go beyond simply building on existing strengths to ensure the library service anticipates as well as reflects. Anticipation of changing user needs requires more than simply a survey – it requires deep user engagement if you are to understand the implications of the information collected in surveys. Without this how can a library establish which innovations are most likely to help users achieve their goals?

Those who fund libraries should know how well funds allocated to the library are being used to meet the information or leisure needs of its clientele. Those managing funding bodies should be notified of costs and outcomes to ensure their continued commitment and support. Strategic marketing reveals the combinations of products and services that deliver the most value for the investment in the service.

Brand and image are important to many. Do your potential users want to be associated with you or do you not fit with the set of people and organisations that they wish to be seen with? Strategic marketing can disentangle this issue and provide users and other stakeholders with powerful ways in which to engage with the library or information service brand.

Some library and information units have been disappointed by the outcomes of their seemingly ineffective marketing activities. Often this is because their efforts have been very much based on broadcasting information and not focused on how the library helps individual groups of users, potential users or other stakeholders get to where they intend to go. In an age where attention spans are short, keep marketing messages interesting rather than simply informational.

Library and information units must have satisfied users otherwise there is very little chance of repeated use and true engagement. Ongoing conversations as part of marketing activities will often include satisfaction surveys. However, managers of strategic marketing recognise that simple high satisfaction scores, while necessary for potential repeat use, will not

automatically be sufficient to ensure repeat use. Despite good service, in our consumer lives we are often tempted by enticing, attractive messages of others and this is no different in the library and information world where the opportunities to satisfy a leisure or information need are many and varied. A professional approach to marketing library and information units will not simply be messaging and tracking satisfaction but will constantly attempt to keep open, involving, engaging, conversations with users. Such open conversations can help ensure some degree of co-creation with users.

Outline of this book

These reasons to employ a professional strategic marketing approach to developing engagement in library and information units provide a good case for investing thinking time in devising marketing strategy. First steps in marketing often bring dramatic insights rather than dramatic results but learning loops increase the power of subsequent marketing activities. The strategic marketing success this book aims to encourage is more easily discussed than implemented. The final chapter of this book (Chapter 12) suggests some key practical activities you can deploy to give your strategy development and implementation activities the best chance of success in engaging library users, non-users and other stakeholders.

Before reaching Chapter 12 this book will outline the strategic marketing planning process and its application in user engagement (Chapter 2); look at the role of ambition in successful marketing planning (Chapter 3); offer advice and techniques for understanding users and potential users of the service (Chapter 4); look at how this understanding can help identify engaging value propositions for specific groups of users (Chapter 5); uncover the best ways to involve, engage and generate support from important stakeholder groups (Chapter 6); examine strategic marketing choices about existing or new products and services to specific groups of users or non-users (Chapter 7); develop engaging marketing messages for users, potential users and other stakeholders (Chapter 8); identify and employ effective marketing channels to get the messages out (Chapter 9); highlight the pivotal role of digital marketing in engagement (Chapter 10); evaluate and report on the response to your marketing and engagement activities (Chapter 11).

Throughout the book there are tools and techniques to support your planning activities, and suggestions of good practice, though be wary of simply copying another library and information unit's marketing activities. What works for them may not work for you.