Marketing Your Library's Business Collections

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So you went to school to learn to be a librarian, but little did you know that in addition to taking courses in archives and record management, and bibliographic access and control, you also should have been learning about marketing, management, psychology, public relations and communication.

The good news is that you don't need to go back to school to earn additional degrees in these subjects. All you need is to follow some basic principles to help you market and promote the products and services you provide at your library.

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ro ,pohskrow   the newest electronic database in your business reference collection.

Let's go through the process and develop some ideas for marketing your business reference collection. The place to start is with the four basic principles of marketing called the 4 P's – product, place, price and promotion.

Product – Know it Well
The best way to market a database is to identify the many different ways it can help your patrons. To do this, you need to know your product inside and out.

Conduct research to find out about the product, read literature and conduct searches yourself. It's important that you understand the value of your products and what their uses and benefits are to your end-users.

Price and Place – In the Library
The next two Ps – price and place – are closely related when it comes to marketing library products and services. Price is measured by money and time. The Place has to be convenient or patrons won't pay the price – which is spending time.

Today, what's important to patrons is time and convenience. Is this information worth a trip to the library? How much effort does it take to use a database in your library? Is it easy to search? Can it be accessed remotely from the comfort of home, the office or a dorm room?

Once you know all about the product, price and place, you can determine who your target market is.

Identifying Potential Target Markets
Know the make-up of your community well so you can identify groups of potential patrons who could benefit

collection. What means the most to th

It's for this reason that media relations, which is developing relationships with reporters and editors, is important. Basically you're trying to form a positive working relationship and make friends with the media. The reciprocal side of this relationship is that they rely on the press releases for information to give to their readers, listeners or viewers.

So in saying that, get to know the media in your community. There's probably a person or two that covers books, libraries, community events. And they'll appreciate a phone call ahead of time – or an e-mail -- since many are very busy, asking if they are the right person.

Another item to inquire about is how they prefer to receive their press releases – through traditional mail, fax or e-mail. You're trying to make it as easy as possible to get them the information. If you have an idea, but it's not newsworthy to develop into a press release, you can develop a "pitch" instead. A pitch is a brief description of a story idea that you give to a reporter or editor.

Lastly, you can develop good media relations by inviting your media contacts to your events. Ask them to come to the library and attend a workshop, or how your business reference collection can help individual investors. The media may not always have time, but you're making the gesture and building goodwill, which are the foundations of good media relations.

Web Site Marketing
In today's world, many of your patrons will visit your library virtually, probably more often than you see them in person, so your Web site becomes an important marketing tool. This is why it's extremely important to make your site welcoming and easy-to-navigate. Whether you're The Thomson Corporation or Peoria Public Library, the same guiding principals for good website design hold true:

- x Content is critical – make sure the information your community wants is easily accessible and complete
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