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## The Library's Product and Excellence

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### ABSTRACT

IN THIS TIME OF TRANSITION FOR LIBRARIES, the use of marketing techniques to identify appropriate products (services, programs, and materials) and to evaluate the effectiveness of these products can be helpful. Libraries have failed to adopt or to recognize the use of marketing for three reasons: (1) a simple misunderstanding that equates marketing with the publicity and public relations function; (2) a lack of understanding of what marketing is and what it involves so that libraries fail to recognize many existing management and collection-development operations as marketing components; and (3) disagreement about the role of the client in determining the library's products and marketing mix. A modified marketing construct, that of a societal-marketing orientation which tries to balance the immediate demands of patrons with the long-term needs of society, may help to address the "good" versus "right" product argument. Product excellence can be defined in a number of ways including effectiveness, optimization of resources, and traditional library selection terms such as quality, timeliness, accuracy, completeness, and availability. The utilization of marketing theory and techniques improves the library's position and helps to assure that the library will be offering products which will be wanted and valued by a client group. Evidence of the value placed upon quality products will be provided by use statistics and political and fiscal support.

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## INTRODUCTION

For a number of years there have been those who have predicted the demise of the library as we have known it. The library literature is full of discussions of the virtual library, the library without walls, or the library as gateway rather than as warehouse. These discussions raise questions about the "contents" of the new library of the future. What will this library look like? What services, programs, and materials will be offered? How can we find answers to important questions about such things as: the relationship of access to ownership; the appropriate content and extent of collections; the right mix of services for a specific community of potential clients; and sources of adequate support for library activities? In order to address these concerns, we must first determine what the role of the library is to be. What is the business of the library? It is the answer to this question which is the crucial first step in defining the future. Once a role is selected or the business is defined, the staff can begin to translate the organization's identity into appropriate products to be offered to clients. At least for public libraries, the American Library Association's publication, *Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries* (McClure et al., 1987) has done much to institutionalize the steps in establishing a specific role for the individual library and to formalize plans for implementation of that role through the provision of appropriate products in the form of services, materials, and programs. The process of identifying and formalizing a role and mission has become accepted practice in even the smallest public library. However, the relationship of roles to products is not well established in all libraries.

Marketing offers both a theory and a process by which libraries can link products, results, and roles. Marketing can assist libraries in determining their future and in identifying quality products—services, programs, and materials. A marketing audit and the resulting plan can contribute to a library's ability to find a niche in the present as well as in the future and to fill that niche by an optimal allocation of resources. A marketing orientation can assist libraries in defining their role and in guaranteeing their future. Marketing provides a theoretical framework within which to address the specific library and information science questions facing public, school, special, and academic libraries in both the public and private sectors. What the library will look like and what it will offer as products can be determined through the use of modern marketing theory and practice.

If marketing provides tools that will assist libraries in their attempt to define themselves and their roles, why have librarians and governing authorities been slow to adopt the strategies of modern marketing despite the initial enthusiasm exhibited within the profession? This

failure to consciously adopt marketing in library practice may be because of at least one of the following reasons: a misunderstanding of marketing and its application in the library environment; a failure to recognize and understand a marketing orientation and its processes even when they are present; or a disagreement with the basic tenet of marketing that places the emphasis upon the client rather than the product, the profit, or the organization itself. The first explanation for the failure of the library community to embrace marketing is the easiest to address and to remedy. The fact that many misunderstand what marketing is and equate it with a sort of sophisticated public relations effort is fairly easy to address. While this misunderstanding is quite widespread, it can be handled by providing better information and education about marketing theory and process. Such information can present the broader implications of marketing and can place the publicity and public relations components of a marketing plan within the larger context of a total marketing plan.

The second reason for the failure of library organizations to adopt marketing theory may be more a matter of failing to recognize marketing than a rejection of the theory or the practical application of that theory. Many organizations may not be as far from adopting modern marketing theory as they think they are. Given current administrative operations and theories, collection development practices, and resource allocation considerations, libraries already have in place some of the components that might contribute to an application of marketing theory for the benefit of the library and the community of clients, especially as such theory impacts products. As Conroy (1984) observed ten years ago:

Although often not done consciously or capably, marketing is not unknown in libraries. For example, when planning new facilities or services, library managers have consistently taken into account demographic shifts, patterns of use, user need and promotion efforts. Without the concept and consciousness of marketing per se, libraries nonetheless have found various pieces of the marketing function so essential that they have used them. (p. 11)

In management, collection-development practice, program planning and evaluation, and, in other areas of library operations, marketing practices are used, but are simply not recognized as possible components of a comprehensive marketing plan. This article attempts to address some of the issues that link current library practice with marketing theory and to explore ways in which the concepts of marketing apply to product excellence and success for libraries of all types.

#### UNDERSTANDING MARKETING

Majaro (1993) presents the definition of marketing used by the Chartered Institute of Marketing as one of the most succinct available:

"Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably" (p. 10). This definition describes the process, but it fails to clarify the full significance of the way in which marketing can and should pervade the whole organization if it is to be effective. It is important to understand that marketing really refers to two distinct, but interrelated concepts: (1) marketing as an organizational attitude, philosophy, a set of shared values; and (2) marketing as a function, a set of activities, a process.

The first concept, that of a marketing orientation, can be contrasted with organizations which are either production (product) or profit oriented. A marketing-oriented organization, on the other hand, is more concerned with attempting to identify and solve customers' problems than it is concerned with supplying discrete products and services or making a profit. Through the four Ps of the marketing mix—product, price, place (of distribution), and promotion—the market-oriented organization or library defines its activities and their resource allocations for the satisfaction of customers, clients, or patrons. While products and profits are important components of the exchange process, the difference is in the emphasis, the shared values within the organization, and the primary motivation for organizational activity. A marketing-oriented group will have a marketing attitude that permeates the entire organization and helps it anticipate events and needs. Evidence strongly suggests that companies that have adopted a marketing orientation are more likely to attain success than those with other orientations (Kotler, 1991; Majaro, 1993). For libraries, Baker (1993) notes that "there is evidence to support the fact that marketing may lead to a broader base of users" (p. 17) as well. A broader base of user/supporters can then be used to acquire resources to further expand and enhance library operations.

Kotler's (1975) definition of marketing is the one most often encountered in the library literature on marketing:

the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the organization's offering in terms of the target markets' needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate and service the markets. (p. 5)

Conroy (1984) summarizes Kotler's long definition by explaining marketing as the organization's effective management of exchange relations with various clients in order to achieve the organization's objectives (p. 11). Such a definition reveals marketing's holistic nature, broad scope, and applicability to a wide range of management activities.

The key points in the marketing concept have been enumerated by many educators and authors in the library field. In each discussion, the concept of marketing as a management tool and process, and the importance of the marketing mix of product, price, place (distribution), and promotion are stressed. Weingand (1987) in particular has stressed the relationship of marketing to the planning process for public libraries. Using a model of convergence and merging, she contends that: "When marketing and planning are combined into a single process, the resultant management tool is one of power and clarity. It is an innovative approach that can make the difference between an information service that is adequate and one that shines" (p. 20). The marketing handbook prepared and distributed by the State Library of Ohio (1993) addresses the issue of integrating other managerial functions, in particular the planning and role-setting process for public libraries, into the marketing organization.

Many librarians complain that they are so busy attempting to stretch resources to the limit, to meet the needs of everyone, that they lack the time and energy to devote to marketing's second aspect, that of processes and activities such as marketing audits and plans. The series of processes and activities that constitute this other aspect of marketing requires systematic and continuous analysis of data, prioritization of goals, analysis of audiences, analysis of products (services, materials, and programs), and identification and anticipation of customer requirements. To be successful, these activities require leadership and a continuing administrative commitment to the allocation of time and energy. A series of poorly integrated or disjointed activities does not constitute a marketing plan. In times of scarce resources, administrators hesitate to ask the staff and others involved with the library to accept yet another project and continuing responsibility. Just when the library might need it most, it is least likely to formally adopt marketing theory and practice in an organization where product (services, materials, and programs) selection, quality, and evaluation have been segregated in different departments. Libraries have a tradition of hierarchical structure which separates members of the organization by function both in terms of level and type of activity. Technical service functions and products (catalogs, OPACs, access tools) are distinct from public service functions and products (reference service, programming, and circulation). Further, public service is often divided into units that are defined by the age of the clients they serve so that children's services and products are distinct from similar adult services and products. Such segmentation further inhibits the ability of the library organization to initiate a comprehensive marketing plan and to coordinate marketing activities. The right hand may not know what the left hand is doing. With a more

holistic approach to the organization and its operations and with the adoption of organizational structures based upon teams, quality circles and more open arrangements in libraries, librarians may find the introduction of marketing theory to be easier to accomplish.

### ACHIEVING CONGRUITY

For approximately fifteen years, the library literature on marketing has been growing, but, during this same time, there have been many other tools, processes, and innovations introduced into the mainstream of library operations, especially in the areas of collection development, resource sharing, and management. Each of these tools or theories has its own vocabulary and framework which appears to supersede, rather than to complement, other theories. For some librarians, marketing theory has been lost in the overwhelming changes and advances in the field during the past two decades. Identifying the processes and basic techniques of marketing currently being used by librarians as part of other theoretical management and library science practices, may help library organizations understand how marketing theory complements, and often enhances, these other constructs and practices. Although some of the administrative and resource management theories within the organization have become part of the organizational culture, the collection-development activities, an important component of the product line of most libraries, are in a state of transition because of issues of access rather than ownership and electronic versus more traditional formats. How does marketing fit into the existing library operation? What can marketing contribute to planning and role setting, project management, TQM (total quality management), collection assessment, resource sharing, access services, re-engineering the organization, or whatever initiative or structure for progress is part of the culture of a particular library? If libraries are going to embrace marketing theory and use it to the best advantage, it must be seen as a means to enhance existing organizational practice. Marketing theory and practice must be presented as complementary to other management and library-oriented theories and practices rather than as independent and isolated operations. Baker (1993) notes that "there is mounting evidence that marketing, with its emphasis on meeting user needs and on adopting an overall systematic plan to meet library objectives, can help libraries operate more efficiently, provide collections and services that will better satisfy patrons, and attract more resources" (p. 3). Thus, it is in the best interests of libraries to consider marketing theory as a means to ensure survival and as a means to adapt to a world of constant change.

One way to explore means by which libraries might achieve more congruity between existing library operations and marketing practice

is to examine the management and library science theories currently in use. The library profession and management science have provided new labels for some theoretical applications over the past few years, but the practices themselves can often be traced through the professional literature for decades. Management theories in libraries, as in other living and changing organizations, have cyclical periods of popularity. Their popularity and use decline as these theories fail to meet the needs of the macro-environment and the micro-organization. Although these management and library science theories are not often being "sold" in the marketplace with a distinct price tag attached, they are products and have life cycles as other products do. The product life cycle consists of an initial period of emergence or introduction followed by stages of accelerating growth, maturity, and decline. This cycle assumes that products have a limited life span, although some may have multiple life cycles under similar names and contents. It further assumes that, during the distinct stages in the life cycle, the product will present unique challenges to the "seller" or provider in terms of production costs, pricing, marketing, resource allocation, and importance. As Kotler (1975) points out: "The product life cycle has characterized the history of many products, services, persons, places, organizations, and ideas. One has only to think of buggy whips, slavery, Hubert Humphrey, the World Federalists, and the Single Tax" (p. 168). Each of us can identify some of the theories and constructs we are currently using to manage present resources and to plan for a variety of possible futures. We can imagine each of these theories, along with their vocabularies, forms, and sometimes unique definitions, to be somewhere on a curve representative of the theory/product's life cycle. Is our organizational culture riding on theories that can be represented on the upward wave of innovation in their life cycles, or are we hold-outs for traditional ways of doing things and riding the tail of the product/theory life cycle as it declines and possibly disappears? Compared to the present life cycle position of modern marketing theory for the nonprofit organization and for libraries, how are your organization's management, collection-development, or program management theories situated on their imaginary life cycle curve?

By envisioning the possible product life cycle of our favorite management and collection-development theories and library practices, we can determine into which of Rogers's (1983) adopter groups we fall as individuals and organizations. Such reflection may open our minds and those of our colleagues to the possibilities of change and growth. This visualization may make it easier to recognize ways in which we are being isolated from additional or different ways of approaching the business of librarianship and library products.

Rogers's categories for the adoption of innovations consist of the following: the innovators who are often responsible for developing the innovation or product; the venturesome early adopters who are most often leaders; the early deliberate majority who are followers willing to take some risks; the late skeptical majority who only go for the sure thing; and the tradition bound laggards who are suspicious of changes and innovations and fail to adopt "new" theories and practices until they are on their "way out" or have themselves become tradition. Such reflection upon the life cycle of management tools and library practices as products and our role as consumers or customers of such products can provide insights into our management and personality styles, but it can also help us to let go of obsolete frameworks and practices and to move on to new possibilities. We can begin to see possible parallels between existing practice and organizational culture and the vocabulary, activities, and theory of marketing. Many marketing techniques exist within library organizations as part of strategic planning, accountability measures, and particularly as activities within the program-planning and the collection-development operations. What we have often failed to do is to understand these processes and techniques as components in a marketing audit and plan. By recognizing these operations as part of a larger theoretical framework, we can improve our holistic approach to library management and operations while incorporating a new conscious marketing orientation.

### PRODUCTS: SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND MATERIALS

In a holistic approach to library operations, the search for excellence is implicit in the attempt to unify the organization under one mission and a vision of the ideal future for the library. The library's success depends upon the quality and excellence of its products. As stated by Weingand (1987): "There is simply no substitute for a top-notch product; inferior or inadequate design will scuttle the most meritorious planning and marketing strategies" (p. 56). The products that libraries provide are varied and ever changing and consist of core, tangible, and augmented products. Kotler's (1982) definition of product is "anything that can be offered to a market to satisfy a need. It includes physical objects, services, persons, places, organizations, and ideas" (p. 289). Products include all of the goods and services made available through the library. These products might include materials owned by the library and services provided by staff of the library, but increasingly the products might also be such things as contracted services from other providers for which the library serves as a type of agent for the client. Products might be electronic information or access to information actually held by other libraries. The

ways in which libraries package information and organize access points between the client and the information are also products of the library. Therefore, cataloging, classifying, OPACs, indexes, and remote access to its own, and those of other libraries, collections, are also part of the library's product line and are directly related to the client market. Further, products consist of both existing and potential services and materials. Traditional reference service, preschool story hour, or Internet access to library-produced databases or other information are all products. Such products may have been in existence for a long period of time and be either declining or still in demand, while other products may only be in the planning, designing, or introduction stages. In addition, the concept of product life cycle, referred to earlier in the discussion of managerial theories, can be considered for each product, whether the product consists of materials or hard goods, access channels, or programs and services. The product life cycle illustrates the need for products to be reviewed, rearranged, redesigned, repackaged, renamed, or even retired. This is an extremely useful idea to introduce into a library organization where often conservatism and resistance to change make it difficult to critically examine any product, good or bad, effective or not, once it is in place. As library authors, educators, and leaders have long tried to stress, the library—any library—is doomed to failure if it attempts to be all things to all people, at all times. Marketing always requires choices of what products should be offered because “no institution can do everything” (State Library of Ohio et al., 1993, p. 3). Products, whether in the form of services, programs, or materials, must be constantly evaluated in terms of their ability to satisfy the community of users so as to justify the support provided by the community or organization. “Like old soldiers in the patriotic song, some products never die, they only fade away. That is to say, they do not feature in policy decisions but simply drift along” (Majaro, 1993, p. 86). Rather than have them drift along consuming valuable resources with little result, the marketing process provides a systematic means by which to evaluate products in a context that helps to eliminate territorial considerations and turf protection. The library organization's comfort level and sentiment toward a program, a collection, or a service may long outlast the product's usefulness for the clients. The need to adapt to ever-changing environments and patron needs is verified by Majaro (1993) who notes that “all the evidence seems to suggest that product life-cycles are becoming shorter and shorter” (p. 71). The realities of our information society, electronic communication, the media, and the virtual library are helping to accelerate the rate of change in our worlds.

Kotler's (1975) five distinguishing characteristics of products can be applied to the varied products of the library. These five

characteristics are: quality, features, styling, brand name, and packaging (p. 164). Of Kotler's five product characteristics, the one that receives the most discussion within libraries is that of quality. In practice, it is generally recognized that the other four characteristics contribute to or diminish product quality. Defining what we mean by quality in a product is more difficult than agreeing that it matters. Quality may be considered synonymous with excellence, but it may also be a variable "grade" or measure of "goodness" for an item. For the purposes of considering product quality in the marketing arena for libraries, "quality" can best be understood as an indication of the relative goodness or degree of perfection of an item. These characteristics may be used to describe products and to indicate a degree of appropriateness relative to a particular market segment or client group. Thus, for libraries, brand name may mean the publisher of a book, the production company or producer for a video, or even the degree and degree-granting institution of a reference librarian. Packaging can be described in terms of attractiveness or appeal, durability, and condition. The type of packaging, the styling, and the features are all elements that distinguish one product from another. These descriptive elements serve to identify products and their variable features that can affect the marketing exchange. These standard characteristics can be applied during the marketing audit to identify and describe the product line of the library.

The differences between core product and tangible product, and tangible product and augmented product are useful distinctions for those responsible for product design, implementation, evaluation, and delivery. A core product is what the individual consumer really wants, and it is often something intangible such as entertainment, wisdom, self-knowledge, or spiritual fulfillment, but librarians do not fill these needs directly by "dancing on their desks, teaching classes in nuclear physics, or conducting prayer meetings" (Baker, p. 53). Instead, libraries provide tangible products in the form of services and materials which meet user needs and requirements. Tangible products have the various characteristics of styling, features, quality level, packaging, and brand name, which determine their ability to meet the needs of clients, whether the clients are theoretical market segments, or real, named individual persons. The augmented product is "the totality of benefits and costs that the client receives or experiences in obtaining the product" (Kotler, 1975, p. 165). Thus, such things as the availability of convenient parking, the general environment of the library, and the level of expertise of the staff constitute the augmented product to the consumers or clients and affect the likelihood of their using the tangible products of the library to acquire core products and thus fulfill more basic and generic needs.

## PRODUCT EXCELLENCE

The concept of quality or excellence has received increased visibility in both the private and public sectors in recent years. The principles outlined by Peters and Waterman in 1982 when *In Search of Excellence* was published, and by W. Edwards Deming and his fourteen points, have permeated management operations in a variety of ways even for those who have not embraced TQM or heard of Deming. The changing concept of the library from a physical place or warehouse to a means of access is another variable that is affecting the concept of product excellence or effectiveness. In terms of marketing theory, product excellence must be tied to market match and client satisfaction. Virgo (1985) talks about optimal allocation of resources by which she means that "resources are said to be optimally allocated when, by changing the mix of the allocation, you are unable to achieve a higher user/audience satisfaction rate" (p. 33). In other words, excellence is measured in terms of product effectiveness in response to client needs. As mentioned earlier, for libraries the discussion of product excellence has been complicated by the polarization of two views of collection and product quality. On the one hand is the definition often associated with Baltimore County and Charlie Robinson. This is characterized as an emphasis upon the "give them what they want" rationale. The other extreme is considered to be a more traditional view and is that of giving the clients what they "ought" to have as judged by the library staff. Given these seemingly conflicting perceptions of product quality, along with the changing definitions of both "library" and "product," how do we structure an approach to assuring excellence in product?

Baker (1993) suggests that libraries might have a societal-marketing orientation which "tries to balance the immediate demands of patrons with the long-term needs of society" (p. 20). This view is based in part upon Kotler's (1982) comments about marketing in nonprofit organizations. "A growing number of marketers see their responsibility to take four factors into account in their marketing decision making: consumer needs, consumer wants, consumer interests, and society's interests" (p. 23). This view does not eliminate entirely the conflict between the "give them what they want" group of librarians and the "give them what they ought to have" crowd since the relative point along the continuum between the two polarized views still needs to be determined by each library. The relative mix of popular high demand items and services versus the "classics" and traditional library products must be determined for each library organization. The ability to respond to client needs in a timely and appropriate manner is given varying value within differing libraries so that improving the availability of specific high demand items or

services may be important to some libraries, while providing a greater variety of titles or highly specialized services may carry more importance within another library of the same or different type with a different client audience. Every organization is responsible for determining how they wish to define excellence for the range of products they attempt to provide to their client groups. It is the primacy of responsiveness to client needs that establishes the marketing culture of the individual library. There are undoubtedly many appropriate proportions of product mixes that might successfully represent a societal-marketing orientation. The percentage of one emphasis rather than the other is dependent upon market segment definition, client needs, and expectations. It is possible that the proportion of immediate need satisfaction to long-term societal information and cultural heritage may be another way of expressing the difference between most public and academic libraries. The product mix is different. With the changing information environment, the reduced need for libraries to be storehouses, and the availability of product lines for even the smallest libraries that are really agents or access channels to materials, information, and services located elsewhere, the notion of product is quickly becoming understood to be more closely associated with the traditional marketing definition as that which is offered to the client in the exchange process. Library products may or may not be materials. They increasingly are services and points of access rather than physical materials.

In Baker's (1993) discussion of product quality as it applies particularly to collections, she points to the differing opinions of what constitutes quality. Patrons want a given book, video, recording, or journal article "to meet their specific needs at a given time" (p. 58). These needs exist at a variety of different levels. The most obvious level and the one most often considered by librarians is the conscious reason given when one asks "why do you want this?" and the response is frequently related to work, study, entertainment, or relaxation. More subtle needs also exist which may not be nearly as apparent to the potential library user. Such less conscious needs might include factors related to developmental issues at various stages of physical, emotional, and intellectual growth; psychological needs for more or less stimulation depending upon factors in a client's life; and physical needs that might inhibit the use of certain materials at a particular time. While librarians and collection-development tradition have usually defined quality for library materials in terms of aesthetic or artistic excellence, these seldom are the factors that determine the right "fit" at a particular time for a particular patron. The proportion of the long-term good of society to the immediate good to the members of a specific market segment becomes a very practical matter that

requires decisions about the allocation of resources. The place of the library along the continuum between the "good stuff" (classics, award winners, traditional services) and the "right stuff" (popular, high-demand materials, programs, and services such as computer games and seemingly unlimited copies of popular teen best-sellers) translates into product decisions that affect the product mix, the product line, and the products themselves. Further, the form, delivery, packaging, quantity, and costs of products are all affected by the general library philosophy regarding the importance of the client's needs. If the emphasis is upon the library's need for ease of operations and a belief in the superiority of the "professional judgment" of the staff over the ability of clients to determine what they desire and need to satisfy their requirements then the library will not acquire a culture of marketing and responsiveness.

It is assumed that with the help of a marketing orientation, marketing audit, marketing plan, and subsequent continuous responsiveness, the library will be able to deliver a series of excellent products in the form of services, programs, and materials to meet the needs of existing and potential clients. Without excellent products that address the specific clients, community, or market segments of a library, the library's support base will deteriorate rather than expand. "If it [the library] offers a poor product, the library will lose patrons, and, eventually, financial support" (Weingand, 1983, p. 22). In today's environment of informed consumerism, distrust of government, and demands for accountability, publicly funded libraries in particular are being challenged to provide products that give a very high return on the dollar. It is excellence or "quality" that distinguishes the successful organization from the mediocre one. It is excellent or quality products (programs, materials, services) that induce customers to return again and again, and to provide the appropriate exchange in terms of funding to allow the marketing or exchange relationship to continue. "Library customers are not captives. They can go elsewhere if not satisfied" (State Library of Ohio et al., 1993, p. 4), and they can withdraw their political and fiscal support in a variety of direct and indirect ways.

Weingand (1984), in discussing "effectiveness of product" related to accountability, suggests that accuracy, speed, completeness, availability, and integration are the keys to product effectiveness. These qualities apply also to defining excellence since one must assume that the same continuum that moves us toward excellence would also be moving us towards more effective accountability. These qualities ought to be considered by libraries when they define the criteria by which they will judge both proposed and existing products. Although these qualities are self-evident as they apply to most library products, some

of Weingand's rationale for these criteria refer once again to the exchange relationship and the delivery of quality products which results in support in the form of funding. For example, in explaining the need for speed in conjunction with accuracy, she says that "an agency that can provide an accurate product which can be delivered rapidly and with a minimum disruption of the client's schedule will be regarded as having a legitimate claim on public resources" (p. 50). By integration, Weingand means the interweaving of these measures of effectiveness into all aspects of the library operation. Again, a more holistic and unified approach to the management and identity of the library is being suggested. This process also refers to the integration of the library into the broader community or organization as an essential component.

Baker (1993), speaking directly about collection development in the marketing organization identifies the following as elements considered by individual users when they are making selections within the library's collections: subject, genre, quality, style, reading level, currency, language, format, attractiveness of the packaging, awareness of the author/title, and miscellaneous issues such as size of print, design of typeface, and length of book or media item. In addition to exploring ways to identify these qualities within collections, what standards of excellence should be applied to noncollection products? What is the relationship of product mix, product popularity, and the life cycle of products to the marketing decisions of libraries? In order to identify, develop, and maintain a complex product line to meet the needs of a library's client population, the library staff must make thoughtful, rather than impulsive, decisions. The product decisions should be made in a proactive, rather than a reactive, environment.

With regard to traditional library products—the materials in the collection—an increasing number of managerial procedures and practices are available to enable the library staff in any type or size of library to profile the collection in a manner that allows for specific relationships between clients and collections or product and market. These collection-related tools include, but are not limited to:

- strategic planning processes;
- the use of output measures;
- collection assessment through the use of the RLG or WLN conspectus or collection mapping;
- library system reports on use, age, acquisition patterns, and expenditures;
- automated collection analysis services from vendors and bibliographic utilities to determine the title mix and/or match to peer

institutions or standard lists such as *Books for College Libraries* (American Library Association, 1988);

- resource sharing statistics such as interlibrary loan transactions by subject, level, or journal title; and
- publishing and production information that can be used to indicate the percentage of appropriate materials actually available to the library's clients either directly or through access services.

In addition, libraries continue to utilize user and community surveys to more clearly identify both client needs and user satisfaction. Group process techniques, such as focus group interviews, are being used to gain insights into the motivations, opinions, and level of satisfaction of client communities. All of these data-gathering environment-clarifying techniques and methods are used by librarians in the management of library resources in an attempt to provide the best possible library service, program mix, and materials. This is marketing even if library organizations do not recognize it as such. Some organizations have implemented these tools for reasons other than marketing audits and plans, but that does not diminish their usefulness in the marketing process.

## CONCLUSION

Librarians, then, may have failed to adopt marketing theory and practices for a variety of reasons. It may be because they misunderstand marketing and believe it to be simply another term for public relations and publicity. At another level it may be because of a real or perceived lack of resources to devote to marketing processes and the coordination of a marketing approach even when many of these processes, if not the organizational orientation, are already part of their organizational culture and operation. Lastly, libraries may not have adopted marketing because of a concern with the basic tenet of marketing theory that moves the locus of control from the librarian-expert to the clients. The first of these reasons can be addressed with information and education. The second can be addressed by identifying the ways in which marketing theory and practice is congruent and complementary to managerial and library operations that are already in place within the library and which may require only a minimum amount of coordination to create a marketing context for decision making. A marketing orientation for a library translates into a strong emphasis upon patron demand. At least in terms of product determination, some librarians perceive a conflict between the traditional emphasis upon the librarian's role in the evaluation and selection of the library's products,

and marketing's emphasis upon the client groups and their role in determining product mix and the length, width, and depth of product lines. The two approaches, librarian-as-expert and modern marketing theory, are often presented as opposites. If one considers these to be polarized orientations for the organization, there is little room to adopt marketing theory, especially in a library where tradition and "the way we have always done it" are the rule. The third reason for a library's failure to adopt marketing theory and practice as it relates to product development, and particularly to collection development, can be addressed by considering a modified marketing theory. A societal-marketing orientation as described by Kotler (1982) and interpreted by Baker (1993) provides for both the satisfaction of immediate client needs and the long-term needs of society which might be identified by experts or, in this case, librarians. "Sometimes the librarian, being the expert, must strike out with ideas and products the public does not yet understand. Drawing that line between responsiveness and innovation is one of the most difficult parts of creative librarianship" and marketing (State Library of Ohio et al., 1993, p. 75). It is at this juncture—between responsiveness and innovation—that vision is required. This is the challenge. It is incumbent upon the members of the library staff to develop excellent products that will fit the needs of particular client groups or market segments, but, at the same time, these products should represent the best professional and informed judgment of the librarian. In the implementation and evaluation stages, the staff must be careful to judge the product on its own merits, considering the usefulness the product has had for the client group. Personal feelings and values are not to enter into such evaluation. The librarian is supposed to care enough to "send the very best" but not care enough to allow personal values, taste, and preferences to enter into the decisions about the development, delivery, and evaluation of excellent products for the library.

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