**What Is an "Accidental" Marketer?**

An "accidental" marketer is someone who started working in libraries without intending to do marketing and publicity work. Oftentimes, people are asked to make fliers for an event or to help plan a program, then they get pulled into doing more and more publicity. They often have little or no training for these tasks. Like so many "other duties as assigned," you end up doing this sort of work without meaning to do and without actually knowing how. If you've found yourself in such a position, then you're an accidental marketer. And you're not alone!

**What Does "Marketing" Really Mean?**

Many people think they're doing "marketing" but they're really not, because that word is used interchangeably with other words. So that you can make sure you're doing "true marketing"—the kind that really works—I'll tell you the real deal.

+ **Marketing** is taking steps to move goods from producers to consumers. It’s determining what people want, delivering it, evaluating consumer satisfaction, and then periodically updating that whole process.

+ **Public Relations** is a planned, long-term communication program (via various media) that has a goal of convincing the public to have good will toward something. It’s helping people to think well of an organization, product, or concept.

+ **Publicity** is sending a message via official channels such as news releases, newsletters, press conferences, etc.

+ **Promotion** is furthering the growth or development of a product or service. It’s not just aiming toward good will; it’s encouraging people to use it by telling those people how it would benefit them.

+ **Advocacy** is getting people who have good opinions of your organization to speak to others on its behalf, to convince other people of its value.

+ **Advertising** is calling attention to something through paid announcements.

+ **Branding** is a process with dual objectives: 1) establishing a strong link between a company and its logo/typeface/picture or name/phrase, and 2) developing the “personality” of your product and service, building the characteristics that should come to mind when people think of you. Branding helps build loyalty.
More Useful Definitions

+ The Four Ps

Product (or Service): What you're offering
Price: Determined by cost
Place: Location of service
Promotion: Demands creativity and planning

+ SWOT Analysis

Strengths: What you do well; advantages you have
Weaknesses: What you need to improve
Opportunities: Assistance you can get from outside
Threats: Competition; what works against you

Strengths and Weaknesses are internal; Opportunities and Threats are external.
Strategies and Tools You Can Use

**Strategies**
Target your efforts toward like-minded groups of people.

Use surveys or focus groups to ask for patron opinions.

Operate on evidence-based information.

Remember: It's all about the customer!

Don't overlook the need for internal marketing: Your own staff members and administrators are among your most important target groups.

Treat members of the media as a separate target market, not just as your conduit to the public.

Never *guess* what people want when you can *ask*.

Have events other than programs to get people into your building, meeting your staff, and seeing your resources. Offer customized training on databases that stakeholders need. Have an Open House. Invite the Mayor for a photo opp.

Don't wait until you're in trouble to start building partnerships and looking for help. Get to know people from your target audiences over a period of time so that, when you need to ask for their opinions, votes, or advocacy, you already have a positive relationship.

Think about "trades" you can arrange with partners.

Experiment! Fail, then experiment again!

Start at the end and build backwards. What outcome do you want to end up with? Think about who can help you reach that goal, then build a relationship.

Always track your results and evaluate them to see what works and what doesn't. Your process needs to be fluid so you can change and improve easily when necessary.

Use student ambassadors to reach other college students.

Write a marketing plan, a communications plan, and a social media plan. Base the on your overall strategic plan, and let them guide your actions throughout the year.
Tools and Info
Adhere to your organization’s Mission and Vision statements.

Use your patron information to its fullest capacity. What attributes do your patrons share? Map out where they live (and notice where they don't).

Find out what sorts of usage reports that your vendors can give you, and make the most of them. According to your ILS, what types of things are used most frequently? What is seldom used? Do you have sets of very frequent and very infrequent borrowers? How much is each of your databases used? What days and times of day have the highest usage?

Use your server logs to check for search trails and patterns. What are users’ major search destinations? Do people get to them quickly or do they come in roundabout ways? You may need to promote certain resources to make them easier to find.

Study your reference question statistics. Are there any frequently asked questions or major topics that expose a certain information need?

Have all staff members, at all levels, brainstorm a SWOT analysis.

Pay special attention to customer feedback, suggestion boxes (physical and online), survey results, and online reviews. These are primary sources of information telling you what people want.

Find out what sort of data your city / university / corporation has on your area and its residents / employees. City planning info can affect your collection development and service decisions. Ditto for projections of growth in your county, info about students expected in the next 5 to 10 years, or information about company employees.

There are many published reports about library funding, computer usage, public opinions, etc. Check these sites; there’s plenty of data for the taking:
ACRL (www.acrl.ala.org/value)
Ithaka S+R (http://www.sr.ithaka.org)
OCLC (https://www.oclc.org/reports.en.html)
Pew Research Center (www.pewresearch.org)