# Literature Review

The Introduction briefly defined promotion, explaining why it is increasingly important for libraries including BBC ones. Here, further literature is reviewed, investigating the research questions. Theories of promotion are placed in context within marketing, then methods used within libraries are outlined. Next, issues specifically relating to users are considered. Although effectiveness tends not to be evaluated, the review ends by studying outcomes of promotion.

Where possible, illustrative examples are taken from within LIS, particularly emphasising special, media libraries; otherwise examples from mainstream marketing journals are given. Further examples are cited in the Methodology.

## PROMOTION IN CONTEXT

Issues raised by the first group of research questions (A. Promotion Methods) are studied here.

### Marketing - overview

Marketing is relevant to profit and non-profit making organisations and helps identify what target markets will most value (and pay for). Kotler and Andreason (1987) show that service, charitable and other non-profit organisations *can* apply marketing concepts.

Eyre (1994) discusses the perceived nebulous status of information as a product, and the difficulty of placing value on this ‘product’ because of the tradition that information should be freely available in a democratic society. However information *can* be seen as a commodity and marketed accordingly: Jose (1995) describes methods, guidelines and implementation of information-marketing.

The role of marketing is to interpret needs and make available and affordable the products and services required. There is a danger, as described by Levitt (1960), of developing a myopic view about what is needed: in supplying existing demand it is possible to believe this is needed, when in fact it is only wanted until a better product is available. Levitt’s key argument is the need (in keeping with the ethos behind most libraries) to be customer- not product-orientated.

Kotler (1994) provides the most in-depth study of promotion found here. Marketing strategy must be transformed into marketing programmes, by taking decisions on marketing expenditures, marketing mix, and marketing allocation. He discusses areas of current research in promotion including motivation research, media research, advertising effectiveness, public image studies, and salesforce quota studies. He lists eight steps in developing the promotion programme:

* identifying target audience
* defining communication objective
* message design
* selecting communication channels
* establishing budget
* dividing budget among promotional tools
* awareness monitoring after promotion
* management and integration of communication for
* consistency/timing/cost-effectiveness.

Chandler (1991), providing practical promotional strategies for information services, simplifies this by listing three general features of the marketing process:

* identify customers/potential customers
* gear products/services to customers
* ensure customers know about products/services.

Rowley (1997) reviews for librarians seven key marketing texts. Both marketing- and library-professionals are geared to satisfying customer needs; Rowley shows that both will be pulled together through the advent of the global business world supported by powerful communication technologies. In the case of libraries, services can be interpreted as access to the collections and advice and assistance provided by staff, while products are the materials themselves. It is important to consider the total package.

### Methods of promotion:

Useful texts were found outlining general promotional strategies:

| REFERENCE | ITEMS COVERED |
| --- | --- |
| Bakewell, 1990 | Discusses examples including:  library image, inter-departmental liaison, public relations, displays, business cards, publications.  Warns against bad public relations e.g. library appearance, negative impressions created by staff, badly presented publicity material.  Stresses importance of user education. |
| Hamilton, 1990 | Gives advice on publicity and marketing libraries,  looks at promotional priorities of particular types of library, describes how to implement these.  Includes: user profiles, newsletters, leaflets and brochures, audio-visual materials, use of computers. |
| Stokes, 1997 | Discusses in detail various standard promotional methods. |
| Usherwood, 1981 | Discusses promotional communication by identifying ‘audience factors’ e.g. user motivation, user interests, and user relationships with particular communication media. This ensures that promotional activities relate to appropriate user groups. |

Consistency is the key, communications should all support the library’s image. Creating corporate identity provides an image of the library to three main audiences; staff, users, and a wider world. Design of guiding and publications is important in developing this identity (Hutchinson and Kirby, 1981). Special librarians in particular must be able to generate income; if their senior management are not aware of the library’s achievements and services provided, they will not support the library during budget discussions. Further, these librarians must be highly visible and accepted throughout their organisations. Many special libraries manage to establish a unique market-niche owing to their specialised customer-base. Powers (1995) discusses marketing in special libraries. She points out that successful libraries, whether in profit or non-profit organisations, are effective in increasing organisational opportunities by discovering and delivering needed information. In these libraries, communication within the organisation is a vital component. Promotion techniques must invite users in; she feels that word-of-mouth promotion is the best method for special libraries.

The literature showed a range of recommended methods, for example:

A useful feature by Raven (1995), describing a range of special and school library services gaining Library Association awards, indicated ways in which libraries are promoting services internally and externally.

Many articles describe the various promotional methods used by libraries, tending to be descriptive, giving views on perceived (not measured) success. Methodology is rarely provided, no empirical data given, nor insight into how techniques are selected or implemented. A range are summarised:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| REFERENCE | LIBRARIES | METHOD |
| Barrow & Hudson, 1996 | map libraries, Canada | importance of special interest groups in promoting their libraries. |
| Enns, 1993 | National Archives, Canada | new initiatives e.g. ‘decentralised access sites’. |
| Glenn & Glenn, 1994 | music libraries | using music therapy at exhibitions and special events. |
| Mason, 1992 | Bedworth Library, Warwickshire | using dinosaur theme to gain local press coverage and increase children’s attendance. |
| Weir, 1988 | Nottinghamshire Archives Office | using exhibitions, Archives Roadshow, publications, the media and education. |

Most media collections and wildlife libraries mentioned in Appendix 2 have websites (see Bibliography for URLs). Although many information centres have a presence on the Internet, it is sometimes rather static. Webber (1997) looks at strategies adopted by libraries using the Internet to improve image, offer enhanced services and communicate with users. Whatever its physical circumstances, a library can appear effective, dynamic and user-orientated on the Net. Peterson *et al.* (1997) analysed functions that can be performed on the Internet, investigated potential impact of the Internet across different products and services, and studied positioning against conventional retailing channels. Technology must be adopted to raise profile and increase promotional activities, as some examples show:

## Summary

Promotion has been placed in context within marketing. Methods and examples from libraries and elsewhere are given. Promotion can be regarded as communications seeking to influence users, so specific issues concerning users are also considered. There is no single ‘correct’ theory of promotion; various factors influence people to use a service, and various factors can make a service successful at a particular time. Effectiveness rarely appears to have been evaluated.