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Who's spinning the library? Responsibilities of academic librarians who promote

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the responsibilities and challenges faced by academic librarians whose major responsibilities include the overall promotion of the library.

Design/methodology/approach – A questionnaire was sent to seven library listservs asking respondents to describe their work duties, promotional activities, academic background, and professional challenges and concerns.

Findings – This study garnered 215 responses. Respondents who completed the questionnaire identified as academic librarians whose major responsibilities include the overall promotion of the library. Librarians who promote face a plethora of challenges, including time restraints, lack of funding and limited support for their promotional efforts. These barriers place a strain on promotional work in academic libraries.

Practical implications – The paper illustrates the roles and responsibilities of librarians who promote and the challenges and obstacles they deal with on an institutional and departmental level.

Originality/value – This study provides a unique snapshot of marketing initiatives across various academic libraries, in the midst of a global economic recession.

Keywords Promotional methods, Marketing, Academic libraries, Librarian roles and responsibilities

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

One could argue that the way we communicate our value is through promotion. Librarians may be viewed as “spin doctors”, a term coined for public relations professionals who always need to communicate a favorable image of the organization, despite any potential negative event or scenario (Jones, 2003). Both the library director and librarians must be able to “spin” a crisis such as budget cuts, staff cuts, and other negative events and communicate the library as a continued valuable service.

On a daily basis, librarians are always promoting a vast array of services and resources, including library professionals as experts in searching and organizing information. Promotion is the way we communicate our value to users. It represents an integral function of librarians. Since the library is a living entity that evolves (Owens, 2002, p. 22), we need to foster its growth through active promotion. Whether we



communicate our value through a newsletter, brochure, flyer, press release, formal presentation, informal dialogue, or through our website, librarians are responsible for raising the profile of the library through various communication channels. Some librarians have the fortunate task of performing these duties as part of their major functions. Some librarians have other duties, like providing reference services, interlibrary loan, acquisitions, cataloging, or library instruction in the classroom or online. Whatever we do, we are attempting to build a bridge between library services and resources and our library users, thus demonstrating our value and importance.

This article explores the responsibilities and challenges faced by academic librarians whose major roles and responsibilities include the overall promotion of the library. Some of these librarians specifically promote information literacy instruction or new emerging technologies within the library. Others are responsible for devising promotional strategies for the entire library. These librarians actively promote library services, resources, and facilities to library users and non-users. In order to understand the nature of their work, the authors distributed an electronic questionnaire to various library listservs. The responses to the questionnaire illustrate an array of activities conducted by librarians to actively promote academic libraries, as well as the challenges and obstacles these librarians face. Comments from respondents speak to the tensions, issues and debates in academic libraries surrounding promotional activities.

Literature review

The library literature presents a myriad of definitions for promotion, marketing and outreach. In her review of the LIS marketing literature, Owens (2002) found that marketing was defined inaccurately as promotion and public relations (p. 7). Promotion is one of the four "P's" of the marketing mix (Owens, 2002, p. 7), the 4 P's being price, place, product, and promotion (Owens, 2002, p.10). Public relations is a subset of promotion (Owens, 2002, p. 7). Public relations is "[t]he way in which an organization manages its relations with its publics" – "publics" meaning the targeted audiences that have an interest or potential interest in or impact on the library's ability to achieve its objectives; this includes financial supporters, users, employees, and suppliers (Elliott de Saez, 2002, p. 80). In the library literature on marketing, the marketing mix places the customer (i.e. the library user) at the center of the organization (Owens, 2002, p. 11). In her analysis on library marketing, Owens argues that most librarians "promote" but do not "market". Marketing involves the process of conducting market research, segmenting customers into groups, promoting products or services to them, and following up with customers. The authors have provided a flowchart below to illustrate how Owens applies the marketing mix to libraries (Figure 1). In addition, the authors have provided another flowchart to illustrate how Rowley (1998) applies the promotional mix to libraries (Figure 2).

Among the many definitions of marketing in libraries, Natarajan (2002) outlines the most pragmatic one for libraries: marketing is a managerial planning process that involves products, place or the mode of delivery, and the cost or price to market and promote the product to a targeted segment or population (p. 27). Marketing focuses largely on the user's needs and not solely on the product being offered (Natarajan, 2002, p. 28). What can be marketed? "[P]roducts, services, organizations, people, places, social issues" (Elliott de Saez, 2002, p. 7). For libraries, marketing means meeting an

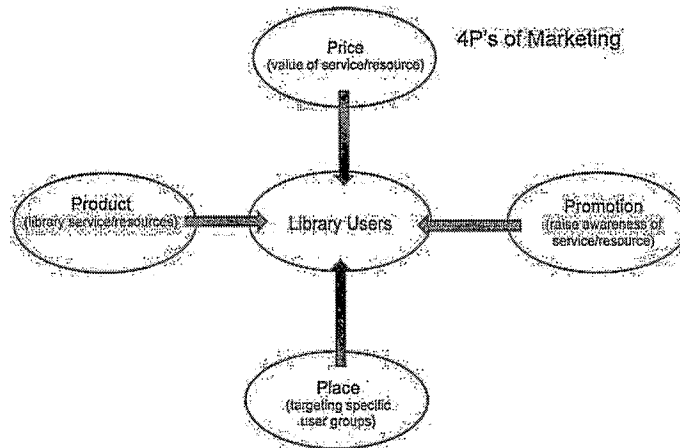


Figure 1.
A visual representation of Owens's (2002) notion of the marketing mix and how it applies to libraries

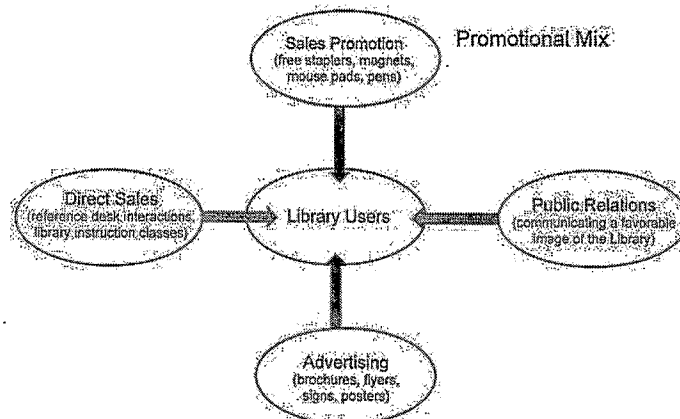


Figure 2.
A visual representation of how Rowley (1998) applies the promotional mix to libraries

information need by providing services and products such as reference, instruction, collections and web content (Baird, 2008, p. 20). After conducting careful market research to determine the needs of target users, libraries can then promote a product or service (Elliott de Saez, 2002, p. 2). Expanding the reach of marketing, library outreach activities can also be considered part of marketing since outreach involves designing programs and services that meet the information needs of those who are not served or underserved by libraries (Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science, 2012). There are various definitions of marketing in the library literature, but one thing is clear: the question is not whether libraries should market or not, but "how thoughtful they should be at it" (Kotler, 1975, p. 9).

Academic librarians have been marketing and promoting libraries for years. Marketing gained currency in the library literature in the 1980s, but marketing ideas were present even in the late 1800s, denoted by terms such as publicity, and later "public relations" (Vilelle, 2006, p. 10). Owens (2002) writes that librarians have been using marketing concepts for several years "but with different terminology than the

for-profit sector" (p. 6). For example, reference services were introduced to improve the library, and branch libraries were established to meet the needs of different disciplines and departments (Owens, 2002). Segmentation, a marketing strategy that involves forming customers into groups based on their receptiveness to certain products, was used by the American Library Association (ALA) when they established the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and other divisions such as the Public Library Association (PLA) (Owens, 2002). Baird (2008), a Marketing, Communications and Outreach Librarian, writes that librarians are marketing all the time: "Whether we are teaching, giving a conference presentation, helping out a customer/client/patron/user/human being who's standing in front of us [...] we are marketing ourselves, our services, and our collections" (p. 20). According to Baird's assertion, here, marketing is an inherent part of the library profession.

However, some librarians are uncomfortable with the terms "marketing" and "promotion". Detractors often associate marketing and promotion with commerce (Baird, 2008; Brewerton, 2003); They have argued that marketing "is a philosophy traditionally at odds with that of academia" (*Strategic Direction*, 2010, p. 23). Several authors have explained why academic libraries are reluctant to engage in marketing activities: academic librarians assume that they have a captive audience, reliable institutional funding, and support from the university's public relations department (Marshall, 2001, p. 117; Singh, 2009, p. 5; Taylor, 2002, p. 7). They also believe that public relations efforts will "create expectations and demands that are beyond the library's capabilities" (Marshall, 2001, p.117). Kumbar (2004) writes that some librarians assume they do not need to market because their importance within the institution is apparent.

Proponents of marketing and promotion insist that these activities are vital to academic libraries. Marshall (2001, p. 116) states that developing positive relations with "various publics" through marketing and promotion can ensure continued financial and political support. Kumbar (2004) states that marketing can help build the library's profile, increase funding and library usage, educate users, and change perceptions. Similarly, Macaluso and Petruzzelli (2005) discusses how librarians must develop relationships with stakeholders in order to lobby for resources, funding, and visibility. This advocacy role of marketing is more important than ever given the current climate of fiscal austerity prompted by the global economic crisis. Competition from Google and the web is also compelling libraries to market and promote their information services and resources (MacDonald *et al.*, 2008). Libraries can no longer rely on their collections to attract and maintain users; they need to communicate the importance and relevance of libraries (Germano, 2010; Spalding and Wang, 2006).

Thought has been given to how marketing activities should be conducted and by whom. Should one person be responsible for marketing? Should marketing activities be distributed among librarians, or assigned exclusively to a marketing team? For Kumbar (2004), collective marketing initiatives are more effective than having one key individual responsible for marketing. The University Libraries at Virginia Tech created an organized and formal marketing program and hired an Outreach Librarian to initiate these activities (Vilelle, 2006). Another marketing model involves creating a library marketing team led by a librarian who is responsible for marketing (Duke and Tucker, 2007). The University of South Florida Libraries transformed their marketing approach from a team-based model to a centralized one led by a Communication

Manager (Metz-Wiseman and Rodgers, 2007). Metz-Wiseman and Rodgers (2007, p. 35) write that a centralized approach "allowed other staff members to focus on priorities in their areas while still being involved in [marketing] projects on an as-needed basis".

Others have examined the scope of marketing in academic libraries. Vikki Ford's 1985 study of public relations is widely cited in the marketing literature (Marshall, 2001, p. 117). The 48 academic library directors who Ford surveyed stated that they engaged in public relations (hereafter PR) activities, but less than half had planned PR programs (Marshall, 2001, p. 117). In a similar vein, Marshall interviewed 13 library directors to determine who was responsible for public relations, what PR activities were planned, and how effective they were deemed to be (Marshall, 2001, p. 116). Six of the 13 respondents had public relations training (Marshall, 2001, p. 119). Newsletters and a separate web page for the library were used as a PR tool by all the institutions. All the directors stated that they had some role in public relations. Nine of the institutions interviewed shared public relations duties between the director and "one or more professional staff", while one institution enlisted the help of a student intern (Marshall, 2001, p. 119). None of the institutions had a "formal, written public relations plan" (Marshall, 2001, p. 121). Marshall's study reveals the lack of planned PR and marketing activities in academic libraries (Vilelle, 2006, p. 12). An unpublished survey of academic libraries by Metz-Wiseman and Rodgers (2007) found that over half of their 129 respondents had full- or part-time staff members who were responsible for public relations and marketing-type activities. Mathews and Bodnar's (2008) survey of member institutions of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) provides rich data on the promotional activities, objectives and challenges faced by ARL libraries, and outlines who is responsible for promotion. The findings from this study are too vast to summarize here, but their work provides a snapshot of marketing before the 2008 recession. The authors will compare and contrast the findings from the Mathews and Bodnar (2008) study in the discussion.

Methodology

In order to explore the roles, responsibilities, and challenges of academic librarians who promote, the authors administered an electronic questionnaire via SurveyMonkey in November 2011. A recruitment e-mail containing a consent form, cleared by the authors' Institutional Review Boards, were sent to several listservs using the "Bcc" header masking e-mail addresses. Listservs such as ili-l, infolit, academicpr, librarymarketing, LIBREF, CANMEDLIB and MEDLIB-L were targeted, since many of the subscribers are academic librarians. These listservs were also selected because academic librarians who promote may work in medical schools, large research libraries, or small college libraries. Lastly, the authors sought responses from different types of academic libraries in the USA and Canada. For this questionnaire, IP addresses were blocked and respondent data was made anonymous.

This study garnered 215 responses out of 4,300 subscribers from the seven listservs. This response rate (5 percent) may be considered low given the number of listservs targeted. However, respondents may be subscribed to more than one listserv at a time, thus they may be accounted for more than once.

For their questionnaire, the authors sought to identify the percentage of daily activities devoted to promotion in a given day. In addition, the authors sought to identify whether respondents had a prior background in promotion. They also wished

to examine whether these librarians made partnerships with their institution's marketing/promotion department. Lastly, respondents were asked to list some of their promotional activities and the challenges they face. To view the questionnaire, please see the Appendix.

Since this was not a random sample, the data is not representative of all librarians who are responsible for promotion in Canadian and US academic institutions. The authors limited their study to academic libraries in Canada and the USA, and thus public libraries were not included in the data.

Results

The respondents

The majority of respondents were from US academic institutions (91.2 percent). Only 5.1 percent of respondents were from Canadian academic institutions and 3.7 percent from academic institutions outside North America. The disproportionate number of US responses could be attributed to the greater representation of American institutions on the listservs. Further, there are more academic institutions in the USA. Based on the 2006 Digest of Education Statistics, there are 6,632 academic institutions in the USA (Knapp *et al.*, 2009) versus 265 in Canada (CBC News, 2006).

Respondents had various position titles, but most titles included the term "reference/public services" (47.2 percent). Several respondents had "outreach" included in their title (37.7 percent), followed by "liaison" (21.2 percent), "communications" (13.7 percent), "marketing" (14.6 percent), and "promotion" (15.6 percent). A number of respondents also noted that "instruction" was included in their job titles (39.2 percent). This finding resonates with Tenopir's (2007) point that instruction and promotion are intertwined; instruction is vital to promoting new and costly databases and other library products. One respondent eloquently echoes this point: "[T]he duties of instruction and outreach are so closely aligned that they are generally understood to be the same by most people". Other job titles included terms such as development, academic partnership, special initiatives and information literacy suggesting that a range of library personnel engage in promoting the library.

Most respondents (92.6 percent) reported that they hold an ALA accredited MLIS degree, while 7.4 percent of respondents reported that they did not hold an MLIS degree. Many (74 percent) stated that they do not have a marketing or promotion background.

Respondents represented a range of library sizes. Less than a quarter have one to ten staff members (24.7 percent). This was followed by institutions with 10-15 staff members (15.8 percent), 15-30 staff members (19.1 percent), then 30-50 members (14.4 percent), 50-100 staff (10.2 percent) and over 100 staff members (13.0 percent). Just under half (46.7 percent) of the respondents have 5,000 or fewer FTEs. The percentage of respondents based on FTE are summarized in Table I.

Time spent on marketing and promotion

Responses to the amount of time spent on marketing and promotion varied. More respondents (34.7 percent) stated that they spend 10-20 percent of their time on these activities. Table II illustrates the diffusion of responses over different time ranges. When staff size was added as a factor to time devoted to promotion and marketing, respondents with more personnel spend, on average, more time promoting and

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marketing (Figure 3). When the number of FTEs was included in an analysis of time spent on marketing and promotion, the average time spent was less linear and conclusive (Figure 4).

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Marketing, promotion and administration

Respondents were asked what factors led to their taking on marketing and promotional responsibilities. Many (43.7 percent) stated that there was a need at their library to

Table I.
Percentage of respondents per FTE range

FTE ranges	Percentage of respondents
0-5,000 FTE	46.7
5,001-10,000 FTE	18.1
10,001-15,000 FTE	11.0
15,001-20,000 FTE	9.0
20,001-25,000 FTE	2.9
25,001-30,000 FTE	5.7
Over 30,000 FTE	6.7

Table II.
Percentage of time spent on promotion

Percentage time spent on promotion	Percentage of respondents
0-10	19
10-20	34.7
20-30	17
30-40	8.5
40-50	6.5
50-75	8.9
75-100	5.6

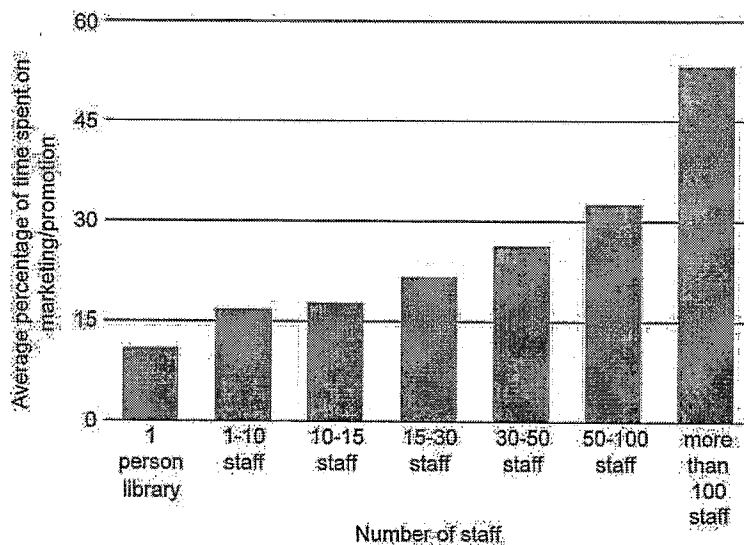
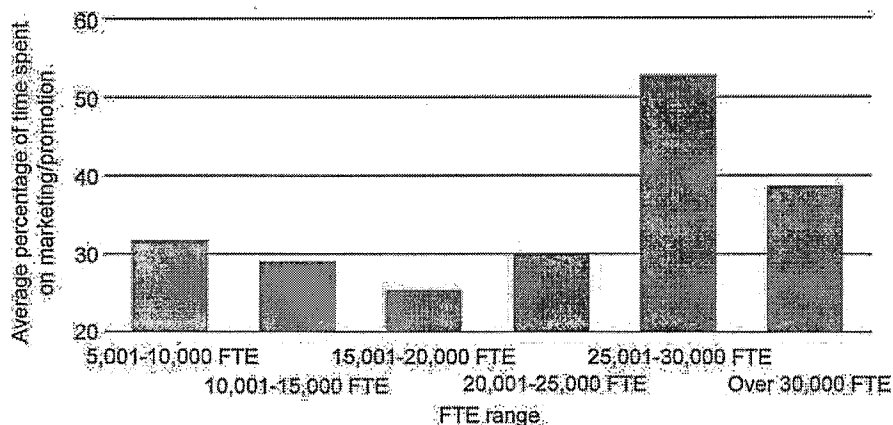


Figure 3.
Average percentage of time spent on marketing/promotion based on library staff size



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Figure 4.
Average percentage of
time spent on
marketing/promotion
based on FTEs

have a contact person for marketing and promotion. Table III summarizes the remaining four most popular reasons for conducting promotional and marketing activities. Respondents also commented that promotion was added to their job description: "my director assigned these duties to me after my hire". Another commented on the lack of planning in pursuing marketing and promotional activities:

A marketing plan was, and still is, badly needed. It was an original interest of the dean. However, the library staff was not prepared to accept the full implications for creating a genuine marketing plan, which is a strategic program that is very different from engaging in tactical promotional efforts. [...] In addition, there is an unwillingness to accept that the library has "customers", for whom library services need to be expertly targeted.

Almost half of respondents (48.1 percent) stated that they sometimes partner with their institution's marketing and/or promotion department (Table IV). One respondent commented on the positive nature of working with the institution's marketing/promotion department:

Factor	Percentage of respondents
Need for a contact person for promotion and outreach	43.7
Marketing plan was needed to promote the library	33.8
Library was under-utilized	33.3
Needed to promote information literacy and/or library instruction	23.9
I have an interest in marketing and promotion	21.1

Table III.
Top five factors that led
respondents to take on
marketing/promotional
responsibilities

Response	Percentage of respondents
Sometimes	48.1
No	24.8
Yes	14.5
Library has its own marketing/promotion department	9.8
Institution does not have a marketing/promotion department	2.8

Table IV.
"Do you partner (or get
support from) the
institution's
marketing/promotion
department?"

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There is a great deal of cooperative work [...] I am required to have my newsletters vetted by them, but this has produced a good working relationship.

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Respondents use different channels to determine what promotional activities they will pursue. The three most popular channels involve surveying and assessing user needs (59.3 percent), networking with colleagues (57 percent) and responding to requests from the college or library administration (55.1 percent). Table V illustrates the five most popular ways in which respondents determine what activities they will pursue.

Promotional activities

Respondents engage in a range of promotional activities, as shown below. The most popular were faculty outreach (80.5 percent) and the promotion of instruction (71.2 percent). Faculty outreach is an important part of the academic librarian's role. It is interesting how fewer respondents reported community outreach (42.8 percent) and outreach to administrative departments (64.7 percent).

The development of bookmarks, flyers, posters (80.9 percent), library guides (73.0 percent), social media (70.7 percent) and advertisements (63.7 percent) can be grouped together in the broad category "promotional material".

Respondents who develop websites (56.7 percent) also sent e-mail blasts (58.1 percent). The two can be coupled into internet-based promotional initiatives. Significantly fewer respondents reported developing a marketing plan (41.9 percent). Respondents also reported a similar number concerning creating publications. Respondents reported developing the library's newsletter (49.0 percent), annual report (33 percent), and YouTube videos (30.2 percent).

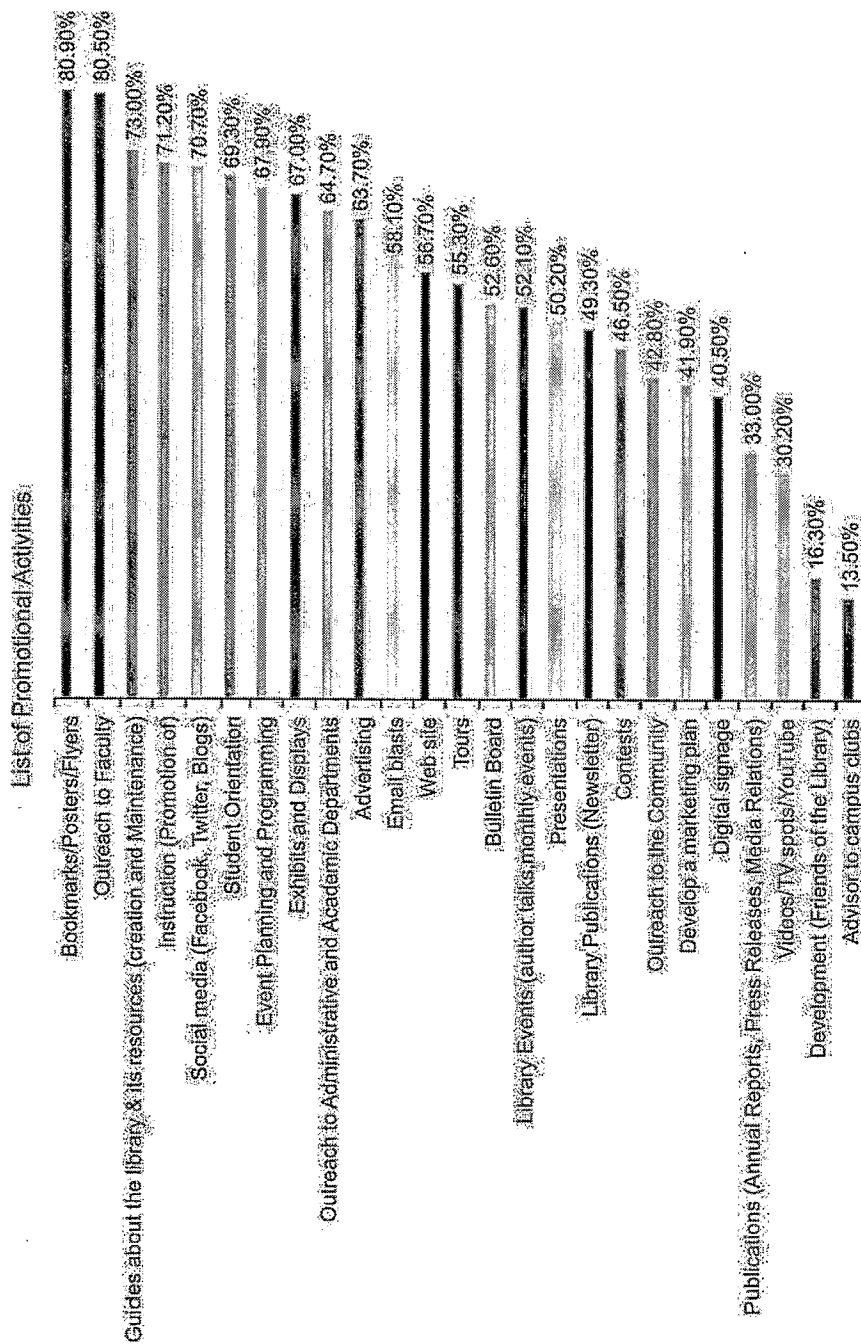
Other respondents noted other activities such as making displays and exhibits (67 percent), leading tours and orientations (69.3 percent), doing presentations (50 percent), and creating bulletin boards (52.6 percent). Figure 5 illustrates several promotional activities that librarians engage in. Respondents were allowed to select more than one item.

Evaluation and assessment

The majority of respondents (80.5 percent) rely on user feedback to evaluate their promotional activities. Questionnaires and surveys were the second most popular method used by respondents (56.3 percent). The top five evaluation methods are listed in Table VI. Respondents also commented on evaluating their activities. One stated that marketing activities are not assessed. Others mentioned that some activities are "more effective than others". Some expressed uncertainty with their promotional efforts: "Hard to say – we have no way of measuring effectiveness". One noted that their promotional efforts are nascent, so it is "[t]oo soon to tell". Another expressed that

Table V.
Top five ways
respondents determine
what promotional
activities to pursue

Response	Percentage of respondents
Survey and assess user needs	59.3
Network with colleagues	57.0
Receive requests from college/library administration	55.1
Reviewed the literature	40.7
Develop promotional activities connected to curriculum	31.8



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Figure 5.
List of promotional
activities by percentage of
responses

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there is “[s]till a mess. A lot of damage to fix”. Overall, the majority of respondents (63.2 percent) stated that their promotional efforts are “somewhat effective”. Table VII summarizes how effective respondents perceive their promotional efforts to be.

246*Challenges and obstacles*

Librarians who promote face numerous challenges and obstacles. Respondents were permitted to select more than one response. Two frequently cited challenges were juggling many responsibilities at once (78 percent), lack of funding (62.6 percent), lack of time (61.7 percent), and lack of staffing /resources (52.8 percent). Figure 6 illustrates these challenges and obstacles by the percentage of responses.

Comments from respondents further elucidate these challenges and obstacles. One respondent described his or her frustrations with the lack of funding for promotional activities:

Librarians at the top seem to be reluctant to spend ANY money on promotion. It is always seen as something extra. Also, some librarians do not like it when I partner with our vendors to get promotional materials that promote the vendor's product.

Another respondent attributes the lack of support and “buy in” for promotional activities to a “significant culture of apathy” where librarians deem these activities to be superfluous.

Others, below, comment on the lack of systematic and planned activities:

- “Promotion is not done systematically. [...] We're working on 'more consistency' in our messages, [...] and developing] a new style guide for publications and web work, [...] and] institutionally approved logos”.
- One challenge is “[d]eveloping an appreciation among the faculty/staff for the need for centralized marketing management”.

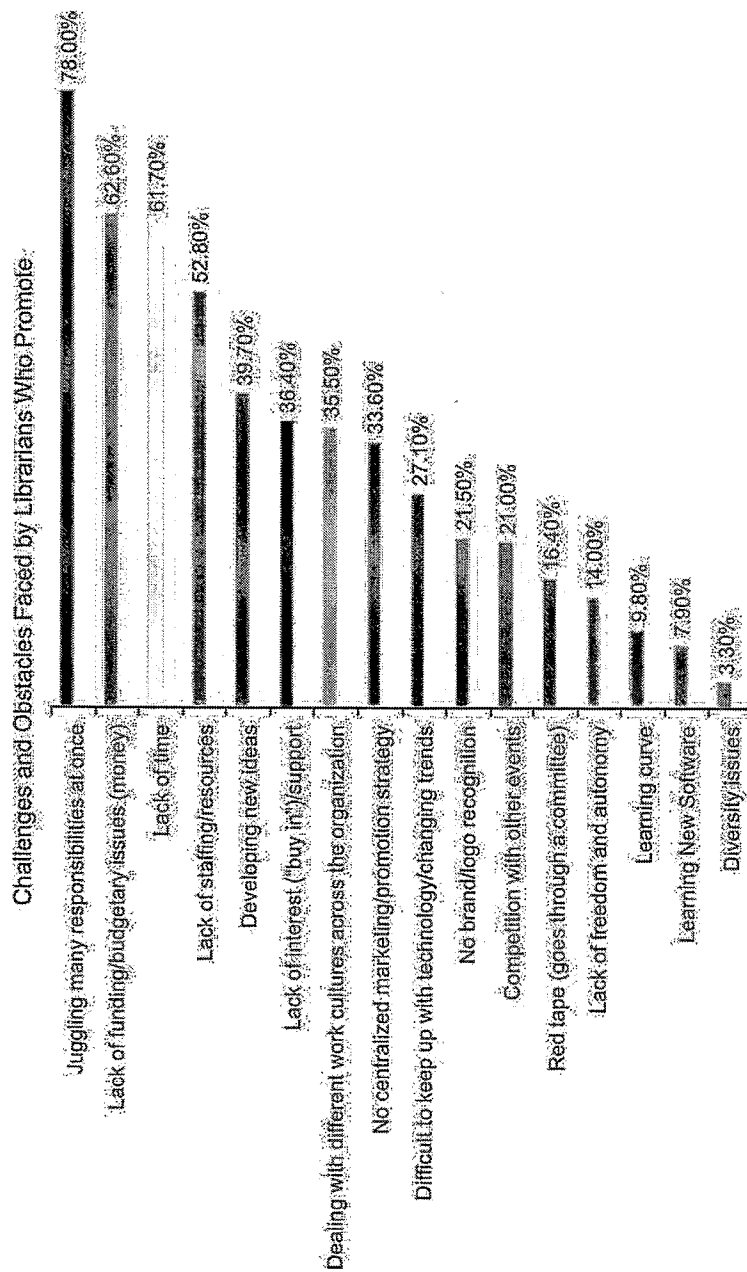
Some respondents, however, note that they have made concerted efforts to formalize promotion and marketing activities:

Table VI.
Top five methods for
evaluating promotional
activities

Response	Percentage of respondents
Feedback from users	80.5
Questionnaires and surveys	56.3
Number of users in the library	53.5
Library web site traffic	45.6
Database usage statistics	39.5

Table VII.
Perceived effectiveness of
promotional activities

Response	Percentage of respondents
Very effective	6.6
Effective	29.7
Somewhat effective	63.2
Not effective	2.4



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Figure 6.
Challenges and obstacles
by percentage of
responses

My job was created about 11 years ago in an attempt to get our then feeble PR attempts into one office.

I was able to hire a Communications Officer last year and as a result we have taken a more strategic approach to communications and have expanded events, promotions and publications.

Lastly, respondents commented on the “dailyness” and diffuse nature of promotional activities, and the need to recognize that promotion often takes place:

Almost everything done in the library is marketing. It is surprising that this is not more readily recognized. [...] This is done daily by both the library administration and anyone working on a public service desk. [...] Most promotion is done by reference librarians, bibliographers, administrators, and support staff engaged with the public.

My position coordinates the promotional activities of our library, but the real promotion comes from the daily performance of all the staff – a good impression or excellent service rendered does more good in building a name and reputation for the library than one-time events or flashy promotions.

Limitations

Our study had a few limitations since it was specifically geared to academic librarians whose major responsibilities include promotion. First, our sample was not representative. We opted for convenience sampling, and as such, our sample of 215 respondents cannot be deemed representative of the population. Our questionnaire also asked academic librarians whether they thought of themselves as “promoters”. Some academic librarians who promote may not identify in this way, even though promotion is a significant part of their job. Issues relating to professional identity may affect whether a librarian responds or not. As well, a sizeable number of respondents represented institutions with smaller FTEs (0-5,000 FTEs, 46.7 percent).

Since our questionnaire targeted academic librarians, we missed valuable data from public librarians. Since many librarians use the terms “marketing”, “promotion”, “outreach”, and “public relations” interchangeably, some of the data in the questionnaire may focus on marketing while other data may focus on promotion or outreach.

Liaison librarians’ roles are very different in scope based on the culture of the library and the academic institution. Some liaisons are only responsible for collection development, while others devise innovative promotional strategies in order to build relationships with their academic departments. Some liaisons are embedded in their discipline’s courses, while others remain at a distance and are the contact person for the library. For some liaisons, they are purely the selector for that subject area and they have little contact with their academic department. Some liaisons even hold limited office hours in their academic departments offices to give consultations. The term “liaison” varies institution to institution, department to department.

In addition, some responses from the questionnaire may be different at different times of the year. For example, the percentage of promotion activities in a given day may vary during the year. During final exam period at the end of the semester there may be a greater need to promote the library’s extended hours. The expectations of librarians who promote may be different across institutions. The authors have

discovered that some will work on press releases, developing library events, fundraising, and writing the library's annual report, while some do not have those responsibilities.

Lastly, the literature illustrates that promotional activities are often conducted by library directors. Most library directors advocate for continued funding each year through active promotion and by illustrating meaningful usage statistics to stakeholders. Since there were very few library directors who completed the questionnaire, the authors believe that few library directors may have subscribed to various library listservs.

Discussion

Academic libraries of various sizes are using different promotional activities and techniques. These activities were initiated for reasons ranging from a need to develop a marketing plan to a need to establish a contact person for promotion. Some of these libraries have been conducting promotional activities for more than five years (20 percent), while a larger number of respondents initiated these activities within the last five years (approximately 67 percent). This high percentage may represent an increased need for promotion due to a decrease in library use. Since reference questions have seen a decline over the years, more users may be locating information (online) without using the library. Users may find Google more user-friendly and they may feel more confident accessing information on their own. The data suggests that libraries are responding through increased promotion so users are made aware of its value and importance. Also, 43 percent of respondents stated that there was a need to have one contact person for library promotion. This response may suggest an increasing effort to have a more focused and planned agenda for promoting libraries.

In addition, the numbers reflect Duke and Tucker's (2007) point that promotion in libraries is not a new phenomenon. The data raises questions around the possible need for prior promotional experience, the types of promotional activities librarians use, the perceived effectiveness of these activities and the challenges these librarians face.

The data raises questions around the extent to which prior promotional experience would be beneficial for librarians who promote. Most respondents were librarians with an MLIS degree. Most did not have prior experience with promotion (74 percent). This finding mirrors Metz-Wiseman and Rodgers's (2007) discussion of promotion background and educational experience. The University of South Florida Libraries sought a candidate with promotion experience to fill their Coordinator of Information and Publications position (Metz-Wiseman and Rodgers, 2007, p. 27). They write that "a high-level, discipline-specific education" is not required for an organization to have an effective public relations program, but because public relations is a "relatively new function in academic libraries", this background is considered to be useful (p. 28). Educational background was also discussed by Singh (2009). Singh contends that libraries will be more successful at promotion if their librarians have some prior education in the field. More than half of the respondents (63 percent) said that their promotional efforts are "somewhat effective". Since most respondents in this study do not have prior marketing and promotional experience and training, perhaps library schools may consider developing formal courses in marketing and promotion so new graduates will learn the skills needed for future employment. The lack of promotional background may also suggest that librarians need more training or professional

development opportunities. Program evaluation skills could also be useful for these librarians.

Respondents use a wide range of promotional strategies from print promotional materials to Web 2.0 channels. This range raises questions around what promotional mediums are effective. A large percentage of libraries (70 percent) are using social networking sites to reach library users and non-users. This percentage suggests that more libraries are using social media than in 2008 when Mathews and Bodnar published their study, which found a limited number of research libraries using these tools (27 percent cited using social networking sites). This percentage may infer that libraries are responding to users' information-seeking behavior. More users are accessing social media to locate information, interact, and contribute user-created content. Promoting online allows libraries to reach a wider audience and is virtually free. Promotion through social media may suggest a decline in using more traditional promotional tools such as brochures, bookmarks, newsletters, and flyers. Mathews (2009) writes how disappointingly low the Web 2.0 adoption rate was for research libraries at the time of their study. He attributes this low figure to conservatism among research libraries, an unfortunate reality given that ARL libraries have great budgets and staff size: "they should be leading the way with the deployment of social technology" (pp. 72-3). The most popular promotional activity among respondents was creating bookmarks/posters and flyers (80.9 percent or 174 respondents). This is a rather old form of promotional activity in libraries, a practice that should be re-examined and revamped. In her study of promotional strategies for electronic resources, Kennedy (2011) discusses the problems with promoting electronic resources, which are a large part of the library's service and collection, using physical materials or "swag" such as pens, pencils, banners and posters. Swag can also be costly. She writes that promotional objects tie e-resources to the physical space of the library (p. 155). Kennedy suggests that libraries need to find ways to "better communicate with patrons who may never use the physical building of the library to access their resources" (Kennedy, 2011, p. 155). Hence, using online promotional strategies – and even mobile techniques – may be more effective and important than ever. There is some indication from this study that libraries are promoting online. The increase in promoting online may illustrate a more cost-effective method to reach users in their online communities and spaces. Promoting online allows the library to penetrate uncharted territories.

Just how effective are these promotional efforts? More than half of respondents consider their efforts to be "somewhat effective" (63 percent). Most (79 percent) rely on user feedback to determine the effectiveness of their promotional efforts and over half determine what activities they will pursue based on user surveys and feedback (58 percent). The high percentage may suggest that more libraries are using assessment tools to capture data for themselves and to report to their institutions and accreditation agencies. By relying on user feedback to create and evaluate promotional activities, respondents are taking a user-centric approach to promotion aligned with marketing principles. The respondents from this study are on the right track compared to the low percentage (34 percent) of respondents from Mathews and Bodnar's (2008) study who actually evaluate their promotional efforts via means such as LibQUAL + surveys, focus groups, web traffic, usage statistics, user feedback and observations. Libraries may be becoming more marketing savvy by focusing on the user.

A majority of respondents spend less than 20 percent of their time on promotion. One of the biggest challenges faced by librarians who promote is juggling multiple roles and responsibilities. This may suggest that many librarians promote as part of their job, but it is not their primary function. In other words, promotion may not be formalized in their jobs. Promotion may be sporadic and case-specific. In addition to multitasking and juggling, many cited problems with obtaining sufficient funding for promotional activities (61 percent), a lack of time (60 percent), and limited staff and resources (51 percent). These findings may be indicative of declining library budgets and the increasing cost of library resources, particularly after the economic downturn of 2008 and the current global recession. Further, promotion may not be viewed as important part of our jobs, or a priority by library administration. Lastly, there may be a lack of departmental buy-in on the importance to promote. In contrast, Mathews and Bodnar (2008) found that their respondents had a difficult time deciding what to promote, how to create an appropriate message, and how to reach a target audience. Given the climate of limited resources, Weingand's (1999) recommendation that libraries establish marketing teams is pertinent here. Teams innovate and engage staff to develop new ideas and a sense of ownership of a project (Weingand, 1999, pp. 21-2). In addition, teams can help spread responsibilities to other staff, preventing work overload of librarians who promote. Teamwork also helps establish departmental buy-in, thus creating less resistance by colleagues. Team-based promotion also creates consistency for the library. Since most respondents cited that they do not have time to promote, having a team or committee develop promotional strategies makes it more seamless and formalized. Team work might also increase morale in a climate of limited resources, and teams may find innovative ways to do more with less.

Conclusion

This study found that while academic librarians are actively promoting libraries, major obstacles hinder or challenge their efforts. Multiple responsibilities, a lack of funding, limited time and resources undermine promotional efforts. With competition from information providers, libraries should be asking themselves "How can we support promotion at our institutions?". Mathews and Bodnar (2008) offer straightforward solutions: libraries need "dedicated budgets, better assessment, and media related skills" and above all, "a shared vision and buy-in from library staff" (p. 12). Straightforward solutions, but not always so easy to achieve. Still, librarians who promote are resilient and they are resourceful. Recent discussions on the AcademicPR email list, a list dedicated to promotion hosted by the American Library Association (ALA) with over 700 subscribers (<http://lists.ala.org/sympa/info/academicpr>), suggests that librarians who promote are interested in supporting and helping each another's efforts and endeavors (Steiner, 2012a). Subscribers on the list responded positively to a petition to create an Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Marketing Discussion Group. The ACRL Board of Directors approved the creation of the discussion group shortly after the petition was closed (Steiner, 2012b). This recent development demonstrates that librarians who promote are actively developing and providing support to make promotion efforts in our libraries more effective and responsive to our users.

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