

**Making it prosper:  
The role of  
marketing in  
developing a  
successful virtual  
reference service.**

**Boosting  
your virtual  
reference use.  
(Lightning Talk)**



Stephanie D. Davis  
Jackson College

**Michigan Virtual Reference Conference  
Eastern Michigan University  
April 25, 2014**



Kelli Herm, Lansing  
Community

## **Making it prosper: The role of marketing in developing a successful virtual reference service**

---

- 1-Introduction-sharing my journey with VRef.**
- 2-Libraries-marketing or bust?**
- 3-Definitions-getting the terminology straight.**
- 4-Marketing-developing a plan.**

# My Journey with Virtual Reference Service.

# Libraries: Marketing or bust?

# Public Relations

**“business of inducing the public  
to have understanding for and goodwill  
toward a person, firm, or institution” (1807)**

# Marketing

**“Marketing is the management process which identifies, anticipates and supplies customers requirements efficiently and profitably” (1)**

**~The Chartered Institute of Marketing**

# Promotion

**“something (such as advertising) that is done to make people aware of something and increase its sales or popularity” (15<sup>th</sup> century)**

# Advertising

**“the action of calling something to the attention of the public especially by paid announcements” (1751)**



# Branding

"promoting of a product or service  
by identifying it with a particular brand" (1913)



[Research Help Now Website](#)

# Develop a marketing plan

- Learn process (books, articles)
- Recognize higher education variations
- Commit it to writing
- Designate someone on staff or spread work between individuals
- Ongoing process
  - Focus on users; learn what they want and need; ask them
  - Evaluate efforts (statistics, antidotes, surveys)
  - Update, keep fresh
- Connect with available resources
  - Campus marketing department (experts)
  - RHN resources (website from previous slide)
  - Software itself (Proactive chat service, [Zopim](#), [John Carroll](#))

# Audience Consideration

- Market Segmentation (need a strategy for each group)
  - Library staff : promote service
  - Students : promote service & advertise
  - Faculty: promote service & advertise
- Targeted Marketing (targeted efforts to various groups in market)
  - Campus students
  - Online students
  - Commuter students
  - Full time faculty
  - Online faculty
  - Adjunct faculty
  - External campus population

# Medium Considerations

- Audience driven
  - Traditional means : TV, Radio, Newspaper, Posters
  - Social media: Facebook, Twitter, Email, Blog
- Technology options
  - Course management systems
  - Database integration
  - Widget placement
- Personal interactions with users
  - Circulation desk
  - Reference desk
  - Library instruction
    - Mention during sessions
    - Infomercial

**“The medium is the message.”**

**~~Marshall McLuhan**

# Promotion @ Jackson College

- History
- Reference Services
- Multiple Campus'
- Collaboration with marketing department
  - Focused awareness campaign
  - Reach out to other campus locations
- Process
  - Met with Director of Marketing
  - Employed Graphic Designer
  - Cost
  - Benefits (RIO)



### **Discussion Points:**

- \*Wording to Use
- \*RHN Website
- \*Website Link
- \*Mediums to Use

### **Graphic Designer Comments:**

- \*I wanted to convey conversation, talking, asking questions
- \*Graphic, yet abstract
- \*Bold colors, yet in harmony, don't compete, conversation, not argument
- \*For students, keep it clear, concise, yet fun & get attention fast!

### **Campaign Included:**

- \*2 Large Banners
- \*25 Posters, 11x17
- \*24 Table Tops



Marketing/Promoting/Advertising:  
What are you doing?



# Recommended Resources

- Dempsey, K. (2009). *The accidental library marketer*. Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Doucett, E. (2008). *Creating your library brand: Communicating your relevance and value to your patrons*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Elliott de Saez, E. (2002). *Marketing concepts for libraries and information services (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. London, England: Facet Publishing. [Note: 3<sup>rd</sup> edition published in 2013]
- Madhusudhan, M. (2008). Marketing of library and information services and products in university libraries: A case study Goa University Library. *Library Philosophy and Practice*. Retrieved from <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/madhusudhan.htm>
- Weingand, D. E. (1995). Preparing for the millennium: The case for using marketing strategies. *Library Trends*, 43(3), 295+.
- Zhang, J. & Mayer, N. (2014). Proactive chat reference: Getting in the users' space. *College & Research Libraries News*, 75(4), 202-205.