



# Implementing Marketing Plans in the Academic Library: Rules, Roles, and Definitions

By Emily Hauser

A Choice White Paper

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Choice White Paper: Implementing Marketing Plans in the Academic Library: Rules, Roles, and Definitions

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# Marketing Academic Library Resources and Services

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## INTRODUCTION

Within librarianship today there is a broadly shared consensus that marketing is necessary to the ongoing health of our institutions, public and academic alike. The general agreement appears to be that market forces (the Googles and Amazons of the world, along with the Great Recession and shriveled budgets) require us to become more assertive in arguing for our place and persuading potential users to choose libraries. Yet outside the pages of books and papers such as this, there is very little consensus as to what marketing entails.

Furthermore, while the profession *writ large* may have come to a consensus about marketing's efficacy, many individual librarians are not yet convinced. Whether this reflects a reticence to take on tools suspected to be antithetical to librarianship's mission, or because many have determined they don't have the necessary budget or staff, the end result is that this broadly shared agreement is still some distance from being realized in concrete terms.

For academic libraries, moreover, there exists yet another, specific layer of opacity regarding the audience to which marketing efforts are meant to be directed: student users, faculty users, the administration that holds the purse strings—or all three?

It's the purpose of this White Paper to address these issues within a larger discussion of marketing's role in the functioning of an academic library; to aid in the development of a shared working terminology; to draw on actionable examples from academic libraries of different sizes and budgets; and ultimately, to help facilitate a broader conversation.

## MARKETING IN LIBRARIES: A WORKING DEFINITION

It's important to note that “marketing,” whatever the scope, isn't a discrete project, but rather an ongoing process of research, action, assessment, and application of lessons learned. Much like libraries

themselves, which Dr. S.R. Ranganathan described as living organisms, marketing plans must be built on an assumption of enduring change if they're to be successful.

When discussing the implementation of marketing principles in our institutions, however, it's not uncommon to find that librarians aren't working with a shared vocabulary. Terms that are often used interchangeably, or with varying definitions, include *marketing*, *outreach*, *promotion*, and *engagement*. With the understanding that a common language is crucial to effective discourse, and for the purposes of this paper, I will offer a concise working definition for *library marketing* that I hope may also serve as a shared foundation for advancing the discussion.

I've drawn from a broad range of resources in drafting this definition, and want to particularly highlight the following:

1. *American Marketing Association* (2013):

"Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large."

<https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing/>

2. Christie Koontz, "Promotions Is Not the Same as Marketing" (2006):

"Marketing is comprised of four major steps, and promotional tools are only active in the third. The four are 1) marketing research, 2) marketing segmentation, 3) marketing mix strategy, and 4) marketing evaluation.... The third step, marketing mix strategy, [entails] the four Ps—product, price, place, and promotion."

<http://www.infotoday.com/mls/jan06/index.shtml>

3. Jill Stover Heinze, *Library Marketing: From Passion to Practice* (2017):

"It is worth noting that based on the AMA's definition, marketing is not just an activity. It encompasses institutions and processes....

[The] high-level categories of marketing activities [*what Koontz refers to as "marketing mix strategy" - ed.*] are 1. designing and developing products and services to meet people's needs; 2. determining the right level of effort, time, or money customers should spend to obtain the products or services; 3. figuring out how to get the products and services to the people who need them; and 4. telling people about the products and services."

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cb/mpub9944237/1:3/--library-marketing-from-passion-to-practice?rgn=div1;view=toc>



Thus, for the purposes of this paper, we offer the following working definition of *library marketing*:

*Library marketing* consists of those activities and processes that comprise user **research**, user **segmentation**, the **promotion** of library products/services, and the **assessment** of, reporting on, and refinement of those activities and processes. It's possible to do any of these things in isolation from the others, but in isolation, none of these things alone constitutes *marketing*.

And a corollary: a working definition of the *marketing librarian*, rooted in the understanding that America's 3,100 academic libraries represent an extraordinary array of institutions with a vast range of FTEs, budgets, and instructional missions.

The implementation of marketing principles is sometimes the work of a committee that meets quarterly or by video conference, and sometimes the work of a single librarian or paraprofessional. Occasionally the people doing this work have backgrounds in business or marketing studies, but more often, they're simply committed members of a library staff, taking on new skills. The marketing these librarians do is sometimes reflected in job titles and descriptions, but often it isn't.

Thus, for the purposes of this paper, we offer the following working definition of a *marketing librarian*:

A *marketing librarian* is any member of a staff who undertakes within a library to implement and engage in the marketing principles of research, segmentation, promotion, and assessment, regardless of job title or past experience.

## RESEARCH, SEGMENTATION, PROMOTION, ASSESSMENT

None of the above need be onerous or costly. "Research" can be as simple as taking comments; "segmentation" begins with acknowledging the different needs of students, faculty, and administrators; "promotion" includes old favorites like tabling and libguides; and "assessment" might mean nothing grander than counting and reporting yeses and nos, and adjusting future efforts accordingly.

Consider a hypothetical example:

A library has posted online libguides geared toward students fulfilling first-year requirements, but click-through rates are low. In order to better determine the usefulness of this tool, library liaisons meet

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**At this point in the discussion it's important to pause and note that marketing serves not just the academic library's users, *but also the academic library itself.***

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and formulate three questions to be incorporated in Welcome Week information sessions—two for students, and one for faculty:

1. Do students know what a libguide is?
2. Does the libguide, as shown to students in this session, look useful to them?
3. What would the faculty member like to see in libguides, to make them more supportive of instruction?

Marketing librarians tally yes/no answers and jot down detailed responses; they write a paragraph or two summarizing the findings, which they share with colleagues. Existing libguides are edited to reflect the information gathered, and two brief emails are drafted: one to all faculty members who teach first-year requirements, and another to all first-year students.

The first email stresses the library's role in supporting faculty's instruction mission, presenting the improved libguide as a tool in that effort; the second introduces the libguide to first-year students, presenting it as an aid to first-year success. Click-through rates are assessed again over the next few months, and when possible, students and faculty are asked one or two follow-up questions. All of that information is used in creating the library's next marketing plan.

Each of these stages requires time, follow-through, and a certain amount of faculty buy-in, each of which can admittedly be precious, but when adapted to the specific needs and parameters of individual institutions, such ideas can be adopted by nearly any academic library looking to implement marketing principles.

At this point in the discussion it's important to pause and note that marketing serves not just the academic library's users, *but also the academic library itself.* A limited budget and librarians' limited hours are best spent promoting and developing products and services that librarians know will be used, and budget decisions are made by administrators to whom librarians must, as stated in ACRL's *2105 Environmental Scan*, "document and communicate the Library's value in supporting the core mission of the institution."

The leadership of any academic institution has goals and priorities that encompass faculty research, student retention, and favorable graduation rates. Libraries that are able to demonstrate their contribution to student success and faculty achievement are more likely to be viewed positively by their institution's administration. In the above hypothetical, increased use of the library website generally and libguides specifically (two metrics easily established by site visits and click-through rates) is a clearly communicated indicator of the library's value to students.

On the other hand, if stage four of the marketing process—assessment—reveals no such improvement, librarians have gleaned crucial data with which to refine or redirect their efforts and funds. There's no shame in launching a program based on the best available information and then discovering that it isn't right for users; the important thing is to use that new information to adapt future products and services to those users' needs.

Finally, academic libraries are as varied as the institutions they serve; the marketing plan of a library system with multiple buildings, dozens of staff members, and 30,000 FTEs is going to be fundamentally different from the plan conceived by a single librarian at a school with 2,000 students and a library staff of seven.

## ACTIONABLE EXAMPLES

Is your institution small or large? Do most students live on campus or off? What languages do they speak?

Librarians already have this kind of information when they begin the research stage of a new marketing plan; the next step might be as simple as collecting that information. Likewise, librarians already know what user segmentation looks like: The needs of faculty are different from those of students, and STEM students' needs diverge from those of humanities majors.

The goal, then, isn't to address an Average Library User at an average academic library, but rather to identify and meet the needs of the communities that fall directly under your library's purview. No matter how excellent its products and services, a library can't serve users if they don't know those products and services exist; equally, if users' needs aren't met by what's offered, the existing products and services don't justify the time and resources invested.

In the words of author Jill Stover Heinze, also the Director of User Experience at University of Virginia Library, a public research university with 24,000 students, library marketing "is making something that has value for users, rather than telling people that they should value something." Or, as noted by Stephanie Espinoza Villamor, eLearning Librarian at the College of Southern Nevada, a public community college with three campuses and 35,000 students, this means "marketing to [users'] needs, rather than to our services."

The following is informed by the marketing activities of a broad range of institutions, including institutions large and small, public and private, community colleges and research universities, each of

which has grappled very differently with these issues while remaining within the basic marketing framework of research, segmentation, promotion, and assessment.

## Research

When librarians talk about research, often the first thing that comes to mind is surveys. Surveys can be a powerful tool, but, as many librarians have discovered, asking people what do you need? Isn't always a productive question. Users often can't identify or articulate their needs, much less how they hope to have those needs met.

Good surveys are easy to complete (not too many questions), easy to hand in (not too many clicks), and approach a subject with some advance knowledge. In our hypothetical, we already knew that students need help navigating first-year requirements. We didn't ask our students an abstract question; instead, we asked for reactions to a concrete example of a tool designed to address an already identified need. In this case, the survey involved two verbal questions for students, and no further effort from anyone being surveyed.

But we didn't leave it at that. If all we'd done is tally yeses and nos, we might have learned that most students didn't think they'd use the libguide, but we wouldn't know if that was because the tool is genuinely unhelpful, or because students were simply unfamiliar with and had to be introduced to it.

This is where the second stage of research—the assessment stage (more on this below)—comes in. If the nos in our information sessions outweighed the yeses, but we later saw an uptick in libguide use, we could conclude that while we can't know what stood behind the students' negative responses, their minds were sufficiently changed to start using the tool they'd been offered. Conversely, if most responses were positive but libguide click-through rates remained low, we could reasonably conclude that we hadn't gotten to the truth of the matter.

The fact that asking questions doesn't necessarily lead to accurate or sufficient information is just one reason that formal library surveys can be, but aren't always, effective. Jessica Kiebler, Library Director at the White Plains campus of Berkeley College, a for-profit college with seven campuses and 7,000 students, says that she and her fellow librarians have found that "our students don't respond well to being surveyed and asked what they want." Kiebler's colleague Bonnie Lafazan, Director of Berkeley's Woodbridge Campus Library, points out that students are already surveyed a good deal by the college, "and some of it is about the library."

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**Regardless of an academic institution's size or priorities, its library will always have to address at least three separate user communities: Students, faculty, and administration.**

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Villamor notes that her library followed up on a popular program by emailing surveys to student participants, “but we didn’t have a lot of success with that,” and that surveys of faculty members at CSN “have to go through the institutional research department.”

The good news of course is that there are many additional research methods available. These range from the mundane to the complex: gate counts are, of course, research; so too is dissecting data already gathered and provided by your institution. Your primary research tool might be tracking research budgets; observing user interactions with a product or service; chatting informally with students at study areas on or near campus; or analyzing the library’s budget to determine where its true priorities lie. Lisa Martin, Coordinator of Outreach for Liaison Services at the University of Houston Libraries, a state research university with 35,000 students, gave a straightforward example of the latter at the 2018 Charleston Conference: “Ninety-two percent of our collection budget goes to electronic resources,” she said. “That means that the overwhelming amount of our marketing and outreach effort should be directed towards marketing electronic resources.”

## Segmentation

Though our working definition of library marketing presents research and segmentation as separate stages, it’s also accurate to say that they go hand-in-hand; indeed, segmentation may even predate research.

Regardless of an academic institution’s size or priorities, its library will always have to address at least three separate user communities: Students, faculty, and administration. Within those three categories, there are almost certainly more user segments: Recent high school graduates versus returning students, or engineering professors versus English lit. While an institution’s administration may not self-evidently be “a user community,” administration represents the institution as a whole, and is served very differently by its libraries than, say, an 18-year-old working on her first real research paper.

“You cannot market to your entire base,” Martin says. “It just doesn’t make sense.”

If we return to our hypothetical, we see segmentation in action:

- In order to do our research, we narrowed our base to two communities: First-year students enrolled in required classes during Welcome Week, and faculty teaching those particular classes at that time.

- After the research stage, we expanded those segments to include *all* first-year students and *all* faculty who teach first-year requirements, at any time.
- After refining the product we're marketing, we then sent very different promotional emails to the latter two user groups: The first email presented a library product (libguides) and its role in supporting faculty's instruction mission; the second presented the same product and its role in helping students achieve their goal of first-year success.
- Ultimately, there will be a third user segment addressed: Any administration officials for whom regular reports are prepared. Positing for the sake of argument that the marketing plan was successful and resulted in increased usage of the library and its services, our report will present the product and the marketing we've done around it as a service to the institution itself, supporting student retention and graduation rates.

Segmentation also plays a key role in what some marketing librarians call "empathetic marketing," where empathy is both a function of emotional awareness and a tool in answering a bedrock question: What does this user group *actually need*?

As Jill Stover Heinze writes, the two most important metrics for determining the value of a product or service are the "benefits and costs for both the library and the user. Users, not librarians, determine what those benefits are. Assessments, therefore, need to probe into users' perceptions. They should identify what users want to accomplish in terms of concrete goals (e.g., writing a paper, obtaining a grant) and emotional goals (e.g., reduced stress, connecting with peers.)"

Abby Annala, an Assessment Librarian at Loyola University and Adjunct Instructor in Leadership, Marketing, and Strategic Communication at Dominican University, talks about "targeted marketing" as a companion to empathetic marketing, and says "that community empathy, that's where we have to start when we're designing offerings."

For instance, it's been pretty well established that undergraduates need support with the stress of finals week. The libraries of College of Southern Nevada have begun to offer the presence of therapy dogs as a way to help meet that need—while also utilizing the presence of dog-loving students to further promote products and services that relieve stress by making academic success more attainable. At any given academic library, such offerings might include our hypothetical libguides, or quiet study spaces, possibly tutors, and certainly the presence of library professionals who can help nervous students navigate their research or the building's wireless printing.

Faculty members might also visit the dogs, but in terms of those users' *needs*, the dogs are just a lucky perk. Faculty's needs are more likely to include support in assuring student success and assistance in answering student FAQs—the latter of which may really be about needing to free up office hours for more idiosyncratic queries—but of course not all of faculty's needs are student-facing.

Faculty may also need to identify an appropriate grant for their research, find the work done on the same topic thirty years ago, or discover who else in academia has recently taken up the subject. Librarians can help meet all of those needs, and so can library databases and discovery tools. Empathetic marketing both recognizes such concerns and takes into consideration that those needs can only be met if faculty know that the appropriate products and services exist.

Finally, just as it doesn't make sense to try to market to a library's entire base as an undifferentiated whole, it also doesn't make sense to try to market to every need of every user at all times. The academic library doesn't yet exist with enough funds, time, and personnel for that kind of coverage. Segmentation serves not only to ensure that user communities are being addressed usefully, but also to help marketing librarians appropriately narrow their focus to manageable marketing projects.

## Promotion

Promotion is typically the stage most readily identified with marketing—indeed, as Koontz and Heinze note in their work, many people confuse the two.

Promotion, however, is a tool used in the course of the marketing process. You've conducted research to identify a library community need; designed a product or service to meet that need; and segmented your user base so that you can offer to meet that need where it lies. How are you going to make sure the right users know about the tool you've designed for them?

In our hypothetical, the first act of promotion was, in fact, embedded in our research: The information sessions where we gathered our first data were also likely the first time many students and faculty had heard of libguides.

Then, once we'd gathered and analyzed our information and reported it among the marketing librarians, we refined the product itself. Our second act of promotion involved follow-up emails, sent to slightly wider segments of our user base, introducing the new and improved libguide with language specific to those segments, and (very crucially) linking to the libguide itself.

Will those emails be enough, though? Probably not. Not only do emails frequently fall through the cracks of a busy in-box, they represent one comment made, once, to the people you're hoping to draw in.

Ideally, we don't stop with emails. Further promotion activities might include posters in first-year dorms; fliers in faculty mailboxes; tabling during Welcome Week; and collaborating with student tutors or liaisons. Promotion doesn't have to be flashy or expensive; it does have to reach the audience that needs (or will spread the word about) the product or service you've designed.

"I think we can get very caught up in what we want to do and not think about the mechanisms that are best to convey that message," Lisa Martin says. "We need to be thinking about the mechanism that will actually reach our audience," she adds, noting that it can be easy to "get caught up in wanting to mention the name of the tool, and not mention why, or what it will get you."

Which begs the question: Should we even call them libguides?

Librarians know what libguides are; our patrons often don't. For those first-years and their instructors, it might be much more useful if we were to call them "pathfinders" or "bibliographies," or even just "support guides."

Rather than talking with a group of confused 18-year-olds and their harried instructors about a word many have never heard, maybe we can say: "This is a [Name of Class] Support Guide for First Year Requirements."

The problem of marketing the *what* rather than the *why* is possibly even greater with the kind of non-intuitive names and descriptions given to massive databases and digital collections over which librarians have no control—so how can we better frame those tools? The words "these are research tools that will help you write your paper" are probably far more communicative than "these are EBSCOhost Databases."

A number of marketing librarians take an approach that one jokingly refers to as "sneaky." Imagine your library has a new product that's an excellent resource for discovering research funding. Rather than announcing "a database demonstration," you could invite faculty to "a discussion of the latest in awards and grants," complete with wine and snacks. Sabine Dantus, Outreach Librarian at Lynn University, a private college in Florida with 3,000 students, has found that making it a party can make all the difference.



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**Yet, arguably, the assessment stage is what makes the entire process something more consequential than what tends to be called outreach or promotion, and transforms it into marketing.**

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Of course, wine and snacks aren't free, and neither are website updates or even bookmarks. Many marketing librarians "exist on a plane where you have no budget," says Virginia Cononie, Coordinator of Reference at the University of South Carolina Upstate, a public university with an enrollment of 6,000.

Cononie recalls a period during which library renovations made promotion work almost impossible—and the resounding success of a paper-covered folding table at the library's entrance, where students were encouraged "to leave an encouraging word" ("they loved it!"). She also notes the overall flexibility of office supplies as promotional tools, and talks about creative library advocacy, such as leaving the building with a laptop to help people register to vote. Equally, marketing librarians can provide on-site research assistance to dorm-dwellers during reading week, or exam prep support during finals. This kind of promotion costs little but shoe leather.

## Assessment

In "Marketing Academic Library Resources and Services" (2018), Choice presented the findings of a survey conducted among 679 academic librarians. Forty-one percent of those surveyed reported that no one at their library generated reports on the outcome of its marketing efforts; 23 percent reported that they were "unsure" if such reports were generated.

Assessment, which, by definition, includes reporting your assessment's findings, is a particular challenge for librarians, not least because it can be especially difficult to construct metrics for such outcomes as "increased awareness." Beyond this, though, the limiting factors faced at every stage of the marketing process are arguably increased as that process reaches its conclusion.

"Assessment" amounts to a second round of research, and we're understandably loathe to impose on users a second time. Whatever budget we had when the marketing plan was implemented is now depleted, possibly more than was anticipated, and it's a good bet that no one is offering more staff or hours to finish the task. Finally, assessment threatens bad news—what if all our hard work demonstrates that our goals weren't met?

Yet, arguably, the assessment stage is what makes the entire process something more consequential than what tends to be called outreach or promotion, and transforms it into marketing. If we don't know what works and what doesn't, if we don't learn from the entire arc of our effort, we'll continue to reinvent the wheel or repeat errors, to no benefit for our users, our library, or our institution.

Were we right about the need we identified? Did the product or service we designed meet that need? How can we do things even better in the future?

That last question points to another reason assessment occasionally poses an obstacle: It effectively renders marketing an endless, looping process—not a straight line with a beginning, middle, and end, but something more akin to a spiral that can never be said to be truly “done”—and all of it on top of duties already assigned. Librarians new to marketing may find the prospect of this daunting; some who are already engaged in marketing may find themselves experiencing burnout.

It may be useful here to turn to Ranganathan’s Five Laws of Library Science, and reference again the idea of libraries as living organisms—for all that semesters, graduation, and grant deadlines offer completion, the larger work of maintaining a thriving library is always ongoing, never done. No one expects a librarian to “finish” their collection management or liaising with departmental staff. Perhaps if we frame library marketing as an integral part of the ebb and flow of any library’s functioning, we will also become more comfortable with its cyclical nature.

There are, of course, other stumbling blocks to assessment, not least the many intangibles of the profession. Gate counts and circs are easily tallied and graphed. But what about “increased awareness,” “greater ease of use,” or, indeed, that one student who’d never been to a library before college, but by senior year had decided to get an MLIS? So much of what academic librarians do is fundamentally immeasurable.

It’s tempting to forgo assessment in these cases, or resist any attempt at measurement as an affront to the essential nature of the library mission. At the end of the day, though, every academic library has to justify its budget—and surely it’s a priority of every academic library to be useful to its user communities. Marketing is nothing more or less than a tool that makes all such goals more easily achievable, a means to an end; assessment is what actualizes that process.

As such, and as a rule, any marketing plan should have rubrics for the intended assessment stage. These should include measures that are easily quantifiable, but may certainly also include such imprecise judgments as “increased satisfaction, as evidenced by positive comments at service desks” or “greater ease of use, as supported by informal conversation between users and librarians.” As Cononie says, “Sometimes, if only one person comes, and I only interact with one person, that’s a successful event for me.” What ultimately matters in such a case is that the conversation is documented, and conclusions are drawn.

Finally, even if the rubrics established in your plan don't ultimately prove appropriate to analyzing your findings, they'll always serve as a starting point, one that reminds you of your initial goals, as well as the need to account for what developed between plan and execution.

## BUILDING A MARKETING PLAN

As should by now be clear, there is, simply put, no one-size-fits-all way to build a marketing plan. For reference, links to sample marketing plans are listed in the appendix section of this report. Many other tools and resources have been compiled in ACRL's "Libraries Transform" toolkit and ACRL's Library Marketing and Outreach Interest Group's resource page.

But what if you're that one marketing librarian at a school with 2,000 students, no budget to speak of, and only a handful of co-workers?

It's important to remember that a marketing plan doesn't have to be fancy or formal to be a plan. It can be a Word doc pinned to a corkboard in which you organized your thoughts.

Typically, you'll start by reverse-engineering from your goal. Let's return, one last time, to our hypothetical, and reimagine it as a series of questions and answers meant to guide a preliminary toe-dip into library marketing.

1. **What's my goal?** Increase online libguide usage among first-year students.
2. **How does this goal align with library and institution priorities?** Encourages student use of library services, which supports academic success among first-year students, in turn supporting student retention and graduation rates.
3. **How can I research current libguide usage?** Track current site visits and click-through rates on website; solicit input from first-year students and faculty.
4. **How will I conduct that research?** Add the libguides and simple questions to first-year requirement information sessions.
5. **How will I document my research?** Tally responses; write brief summary.
6. **How will I use the results of my research?** Edit and relaunch libguides in keeping with student and faculty comments.

7. **How will I promote the new libguides?** Differentiated emails to first-year students and faculty who teach first-year requirements; poster featuring new libguides in all first-year dorms; collaboration with student tutors and liaisons.
8. **How will I assess my efforts?** Continue to track site visits and click-through rates, and conduct informal follow-up conversations with students, faculty, and student tutors/liaisons. Produce a report of these findings six months after launch of new libguides.

## CONCLUSION

The fact that a broadly understood need for “marketing” has become conventional wisdom within the library universe doesn’t mean that librarians themselves are universally onboard or found the bandwidth to consider what marketing might entail. Budget, staff size, and existing time constraints may seem like non-negotiable obstacles to investigating and implementing marketing principles, and efforts to get around those obstacles may be stymied by discourse that remains in its early, formative stages.

This white paper was produced as a tool to assist those wishing to address these concerns by offering a working terminology alongside ideas and examples that are adaptable to a wide range of academic library experiences, and by recasting marketing more broadly not as something foreign to the library mission, but rather as a process that can be fully supportive of and integrated into a library’s regular functioning. An intentional marketing plan will successfully serve library users, the larger institution, and the library itself, and need not be complicated or costly.

A successful library marketing plan will include four stages: Research, segmentation, promotion, and assessment. These stages will never be entirely separate from each other, and while an individual marketing plan can be successfully completed, the work of marketing itself is not unlike collection management—never done, always informed by what was learned the last time. For that reason, the reporting aspect of assessment may be library marketing’s single most consequential element: If outcomes aren’t studied, mistakes will be repeated, effort wasted and replicated, and neither users, the library, nor the academic institution will be served.

Marketing plans can involve committees and sophisticated planning tools, or a single dedicated librarian with a legal pad. Research may mean extensive analysis of cross-referenced data, but it can just as easily mean conversations on the quad. Promotion can be conduct-

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**The fact that a broadly-understood need for “marketing” has become conventional wisdom within the library universe doesn’t mean that librarians themselves have universally gotten on-board.**

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ed with markers or wine, and assessment might just mean making a list of how many people came to which event. As long as that list doesn't languish on a desk but rather serves to inform the next marketing plan, that list may be all the assessment you need.

Ultimately, what constitutes “success” in any individual library will depend on the circumstances in which that library exists and the needs of that library's user communities. Only the librarians working to meet those needs will be able to determine the efficacy of their efforts—and hopefully they will remember that a plan that stumbles and reveals errors can still be considered a success, because nothing can improve if we don't first get clarity of vision.

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## APPENDIX

### Sample Marketing Plans

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Choice White Paper: Implementing Marketing Plans in the Academic  
Library: Rules, Roles, and Definitions

