



the front line

I suspect that most of us are so busy getting on with the job, trying to meet the needs of our various clients in an optimum way, fighting deadlines and shrinking budgets, that we give too little thought to the need to promote and market ourselves and our services.

In fact, if we think about this at all, it could well be to reject the notion (although it's unlikely we would admit to this) on the grounds that with resources stretched to the limit, further promotion would lead to an unmanageable and unendurable load. We would probably rationalise such a position by observing that in such a situation we would quickly lose credibility, and therefore we should do as little promotion as we believe we must.

We all pay lip service to the need for promotion and marketing but how many of us actually *do* it, and do it well enough? Some, do market their libraries and services with stunning effect, but they seem to be in a minority.

Helen Gothberg writing in *Library Administration and Management* 1(2), March, 1987, defines marketing as 'an advertising strategy used to promote an idea or sell a product.' 'Marketing,' she says, 'is based on an understanding of a potential buyer's or client's needs and how to satisfy them through appropriate means.'

Marketing, then, is an essential part of our public relations armoury. Libraries of all

kinds must be concerned to demonstrate and prove their value. Not only is this activity necessary to their health and welfare but possibly to their survival.

Too many of us, I believe, are still coasting on the assumption that the value of our services is not only self-evident, but is seen to be essential. But unlike health services, sanitation services and water supply, for example, libraries are not essential — unless they are *perceived* to be so, and we make them so!

There is an urgent challenge here for all of us — individually, and as an Association. We can no longer take the position that we shouldn't have to sell what seems to us to be a demonstrably valuable service and expect that the service will be either understood or supported by those who hold the purse-strings. Those purse-strings, as we know, are pulling ever tighter and the importance and value of our services and our profession must be proclaimed!

As Mona Garvey says in her book *Library Public Relations* (NY, Wilson, 1980): 'Public relations is an integral component, and extension, of the best kind of library operation and service. It should be a carefully planned, continuous program of identifying, analysing, and meeting patron needs, *as well as* effectively *communicating* with our various publics.' (my emphasis).

In Victoria at the present time we are seeing a vigorous campaign being mounted by SOLV (Survival of Libraries in Victoria) as the Victorian Government threatens to cut \$2 million from public library funding, and to introduce user charges. Meanwhile an extensive, and as some would tell it, a threatening review of Federal Departmental libraries is underway. We know of numbers of special li-

braries in the private sector which have either been closed or are threatened.

I believe that the need for effective public relations, promotion and marketing of our library services has never been more urgent and necessary than it is today.

Peter Dawe
President



IFLA 1988 Living Together — People Libraries, Information

IFLA Budget

From time to time the LAA receives enquiries from members about the IFLA Conference budget. Most of these are prompted by a concern that the Association's funds may be needed to subsidise the Conference should it run at a financial loss.

The Conference Committee believes that these concerns are unfounded. It is determined that the IFLA Conference should be fully self-financing and currently we have every indication that this will be the case.

As we get closer to the date our ability to accurately estimate the costs associated with the Conference improves. It is pleasing to note that in a number of areas earlier estimates seem to have been over-pessimistic and our more recent estimates of costs are coming down. The Conference Executive has also negotiated with IFLA various changes in the procedures to be followed in the conduct of the Conference which have also had a beneficial effect on our cost structure.

We now believe that the Conference can be
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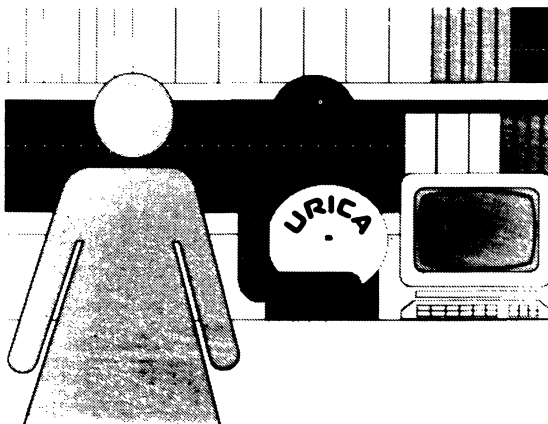
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