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Marketing is increasingly seen as an integral part of the management function of both government and non-government organisations. While traditionally the province of consumer-goods businesses, marketing principles are now a key to corporate success in a multiplicity of work environments. A structured marketing approach for librarians and information professionals can assist in the provision of more tailored services to consumers, to attract more users, to raise the image of service providers and to enhance the perception of libraries, librarians and information professionals.

The availability of marketing literature specifically directed at the library sector is indicative of the fact that many library services are already using marketing principles to achieve some of their corporate goals. ALIA's training and development self-education course, *Marketing strategies for libraries and information agencies*, (Fay Nicholson, 1993) represents an excellent approach to the study of marketing. Through this program students can develop the skills necessary to apply marketing principles in their workplaces.

So what is marketing and how can it help us improve our services? Many definitions of marketing are available in the literature and perhaps the most popular comes from the writings of Phillip Kotler: *Marketing is human activity directed at satisfying needs and wants through exchange processes*. Such definitions, while useful, do little to shed light on what a *marketing approach* is all about. I recall that a Coca Cola executive once said that it was the aim of his company to position its product 'within an arm's length of desire'. In many ways this phrase neatly sums up the goal of the successful marketer. The Coca Cola Company has set out to make its

product attractive to a huge global market and, importantly, to then ensure that it is accessible. Coca Cola is one of the great models of marketing achievement.

What really distinguishes marketing from other management orientations is its focus on the customer as opposed to a focus on the product. By determining the needs of potential customers, and by ensuring that the product or service that is being offered meets those needs, there is always a more successful outcome. The product that is sold by Coca Cola may appear to be similar to many other cola products (in blind tastings different brands of cola are difficult to identify) yet Coke has the dominant market position. Coke is selling more than cola. It is selling a thirst quencher and a life-style (youth, sun, surf and fun—the 'real thing'). Other popular case studies in marketing courses include Volvo (which is selling 'safety' on the road) and Revlon (Charles Revson once said: 'In the factory we make cosmetics; in the store we sell hope').

What do library customers look for when they enter a library or make requests of library staff? The short answer is that they are looking for a multitude of different things depending on the nature and location of the service and their needs and expectations. Many librarians believe that they are predominantly in the 'information business'. Others recognise that their library provides a basic social function within the local community. Some are involved in children's activities and literacy programs. A marketing approach assists us to identify those customer needs that remain unmet and to develop the appropriate 'products' and strategies to meet those needs. A marketing approach can also be used to con-

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vince decision-makers that the services provided through your library are of critical importance and therefore worthy of increased funding. And, these principles can be applied to the issue of the image of the profession as a whole—but more of that in another issue of *inCite*.

In a nutshell, the steps involved in marketing are:

- identifying consumer needs;
- developing a product or service to meet those needs;
- deciding how the product or service is to be made available given the profit, corporate or policy objectives of the organisation;
- communicating and promoting the product or service;
- making the product or service conveniently available;
- ensuring that the customer is satisfied with the product or service.

Students of marketing learn how to use market research techniques to support or develop marketing strategies. They become familiar with 'the marketing mix'—a term used to identify the essential components of successful marketing. These components embrace Product, Place, Price and Promotion—widely considered to be the four essential considerations in achieving the desired level of 'market share'.

The study of marketing principles can assist us to reflect on the opportunities that exist to promote both ourselves and our institutions. There may appear to be an excessive amount of jargon in the lexicon of marketing and a tendency to apply scientific principles to what might be better left to our common sense, but wouldn't it be lovely if library services could be positioned 'within an arm's length of desire'—accessible, longed-for and adequately funded!