

You do *what?*

Lois Jewell is Promotions Librarian in the ACT Library Service

You're the Promotions Librarian? That's nice... but what do you actually do?'

This is a question I have been asked many times since commencing as the ACT Library Service (ACTLS) Promotions Librarian in April this year. It is commonly followed by the question 'Why?' Surely a public library has no need to market its services, or to conduct public relations campaigns to publicise their activities...

Well... in fact there is a real need to market library collections and services. Libraries are often easy targets for funding cutbacks, and there is keen competition for public funding for special projects. Information technology and alternative means of entertainment are constantly changing the needs of the public library's traditional market groups. Public libraries cannot afford *not* to promote.

The position of Promotions Librarian was set up in the ACTLS in 1991 on a part-time basis, becoming full-time in 1993. The position has varied responsibilities, not all of which could be considered 'librarianship', but it requires a detailed knowledge of public library practices and procedures, so that a professional officer classification was considered appropriate.

The Promotions Librarian supports each branch of the library system, by:

- coordinating publicity and promotions, including media contact and publications;
- providing assistance and advice to staff in the preparation of all public documents;
- ensuring appropriate publicity for all events;
- keeping the Director and Executive committee informed of branch activities;
- producing a staff newsletter;
- maintaining records—including reports, photographs and media clippings—for future reference.

Promotions activities

The ACTLS promotions activi-

ties are focused primarily on the improvement of public communications and raising the image of the library service in the Canberra community. The main components of these Public Image, Media Contact and Special Events.

Public image

Earlier in 1994, the Library Service took part in the Canberra Festival by mounting a display of brochures and registration cards on a table set up in a major Canberra shopping centre. When this table was full, the need for a standard image in publications was evident! The table was a haphazard collection of paper in different sizes, colours and textures, with a dizzying variety of graphics and print fonts.

Now the ACTLS is implementing a Corporate Style Guide, providing a standard format for official documents such as letters and minute papers, and guidelines for the production of promotional materials such as posters, fliers and brochures. The Guide will create a recognisable image for the library service and the concept of public image is also being extended to signage and decor, internal and external, in each branch to establish a highly visible, professional image.

Media contact

To make efficient use of available media sources and build good working relationships, the ACTLS is streamlining communications channels and procedures. A standard media release form has been developed, and a resource file compiles information on opportunities for publicity throughout the community.

An important component in this strategy is the fact that all media contact is coordinated through the Promotions Librarian. This improves communication with the media by providing them with a known contact in the organisation, while also allowing for accurate media monitoring, and ensuring

management is informed of all activities.

Special events

Special events, ranging from 'Readers Meet Writers' discussion groups to dramatic storytime productions, provide excellent opportunities for promotion of public library services. The ACT Library Service selects various dates throughout the year for special activities to promote the service. These feature such events as Children's Book Week, Australian Library Week, Heritage Week and Children's Week. There are also special programs related to, e.g., the International Year of the Family. Each branch participates in such events, under the coordination of the Promotions Librarian.

While much has been achieved to date, there is still much to be done in the development of our promotions strategy. Promotion is an ongoing activity that should grow and change with the organisation. Promotion has taken its first steps in the ACTLS, and its importance is growing in recognition both within the organisation and the local community.

Tips for successful public library promotions

- Recognise your staff as one of the major target groups.
- Evaluate your library's brochures and signs with a critical eye.
- Develop a 'style' for all public documents for your library, and adopt it throughout your organisation.
- Build contacts in the local community, and make the most of them in promoting library services.
- Gather information on promotion and marketing in libraries and talk to others who are actively promoting their libraries.
- Effective promotion is not just large numbers of people attending extravagant library activities—each new member attracted to the library is a measure of your success. ■