

**It's time to get back to basics with your marketing.**

**Marketing is not a dirty word.** One of my favourite definitions of marketing is by Edward de Bono, who said, "Marketing is about providing customers with the best possible value, and being famous for it". Marketing is an essential function within libraries: it helps attract more patrons to your library, it encourages them to visit more often, and it encourages them to use more library products and services and provide feedback about them. Successful libraries properly invest time, money, and personnel in the marketing function. Make sure your library does too – after all, what's the point of having a great collection or event if no one knows about it?

**Write down your objectives and stay focused.** Many libraries have Library Plans, which contain clear goals and objectives. Does your library aim to increase circulations? Funding? Number of staff? Memberships? Information inquiries? Attendance rates? Only by having clear objectives and writing them down can you measure the success of your marketing activities.

**Be clear about who you are targeting.** This is essential for effective communication. The more defined your audience, the easier it is to communicate to them. Not sure how to do this? Decide the criteria on which you are grouping your audience. This can be by age, location, gender, hobby, knowledge of technology, and so on. Develop a profile of these people, walk in their shoes. Decide what to communicate, and how to communicate: select one or two key messages to convey and don't use library jargon. Focus on the benefits of what you are providing the whats in it for me (WIIFM) factor. Then implement, assess, and continuously improve.

**Be prepared to be persistent and consistent.** People rarely take action after one exposure to a marketing message. Research tells us that it usually takes multiple exposures for people to be motivated enough to visit your branches, become a member, borrow an item, attend an event. Remember, marketing is a permanent process – not a once-off task.

**Encourage your patrons to visit, and visit again.** Say thank you for becoming a member. Ask for a testimonial and use it on marketing collateral. Turn outstanding fines into positives. For example, ask patrons to donate food in return for their fines being revoked, and donate the food to a charitable organisation (a great way to attract local media coverage!). Conduct a satisfaction survey of members. Run membership campaigns and competitions. Establish a Milestone Member (eg 10,000th member). Conduct random monthly draws for prizes donated by commercial partners. Grow your membership numbers, for example 30 members in 30 days. Use your membership database; distribute regular print or email newsletters promoting what's new to your collection and upcoming events. Officially launch a new product, service, alliance, or event. Piggyback on other events in the community.

**Focus on building long-term relationships.** Bain and Co (2002) highlight some reasons why organisations should focus on customer loyalty: keeping existing customers is 6 times cheaper than acquiring new ones, loyal customers increase their spending (or in libraries case, borrowing)

over time, the costs associated with serving them decrease, including marketing, and satisfied customers recommend the organisation to others.

**Work with the media.** Before you do, however, know their deadlines. Know the writers and photographers – ask for names, emails, phone, and fax numbers and keep a current database. Do your research, read, and listen to have a better understanding of their medium. Test your story ideas with colleagues. If your story idea isn't so newsworthy, consider submitting it to community notice boards. Also consider producing a media kit for your library, which contains fact sheets, backgrounders, features, bios, and other collateral such as business cards, posters, promotional merchandise, newsletters, or calendar of events.

**Don't go it alone – collaborate!** By collaborating with other organisations, you can save money, attract funding, gain media attention, and deliver successful events. Approach commercial entities for in-kind and financial support. Libraries provide a terrific opportunity for companies to give back to the local community (corporate social responsibility). Sporting clubs such as AFL teams often have policies about their players dedicating a certain amount of time – for free – for community activities. A major sporting identity as a library ambassador can attract the media and new members.

Times may be tough for many members of our community in the year ahead. Embrace your library's marketing – by doing so you'll remind residents of the value we as Australians place on literacy, education, culture, and freedom.

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## Marketing libraries for the community

Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) is an innovative and dynamic library service, one of the largest in the Melbourne metropolitan area, covering the municipalities of Banyule, Whittlesea, and Nillumbik.

In the past two years, YPRL has redefined its organisational values. It aspires to be "Informed, Connected, Inclusive and Educated". In its 2008 strategic plan, the Library Board, in partnership with the EMT team, defined six key goals for its branches:

1. Libraries building community capacity
2. Libraries as community hubs
3. Libraries online
4. Skilled and confident library staff
5. Seamless integrated technology
6. Sustainable and responsible finance and governance.

The YPRL community is socio-economically and ethnically diverse, with 153 languages spoken in our area. Our libraries must therefore cater for a wide demographic, including young families, a large student body, and an ageing population.

# MARKETING YOUR LIBRARY

With this in mind, the library has developed several strategic frameworks for these discrete groups, in which the library functions not simply in its traditional role, but as a focal point for the community. The YPRL aims to shape the library as a facility where people can meet, socialise, network, access information, educational, and cultural opportunities, and be entertained.

The challenge, as for most libraries, was how to identify, fund, and promote our key activities.

The YPRL approached this challenge in a three-step process:

1. By understanding the library's 'point of difference' and defining our products and services;
2. By creating a fresh, distinctive, and representative image, which would serve to enhance community awareness and staff pride;
3. By educating the target community about the services on offer through consistent branding of products.

We needed to bear in mind that any style, format, or idea developed would require a minimum lifespan of 5 years. Also, the concept would need to be sufficiently flexible in order to be adaptable as services and community grew and changed.

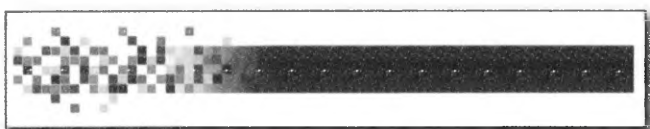
Having identified its critical point of difference as the range of activities and services deliverable to the community, the Yarra Plenty Regional Library established its Outreach Team. YPRL Outreach then took up the task of developing a strong brand and introducing a new image for the organisation, at a time when the programs and services were developing beyond the standard library offerings.

YPRL's former marketing strategy had lacked the unifying force of an overall concept, and the old green leaf logo was in need of a makeover.

The Outreach Manager, in consultation with a small team and a local graphic designer, developed the visual theme of what we now call the mosaic squares. The coloured patchwork concept, which reflects mosaic artwork and tiles featured throughout several branches, also represents the variety of artistic and cultural activities associated with our libraries.

The squares at the heart of the design are in five colours, each one representative of one sector of the library's target audience:

- Green Squares – general marketing material
- Lime green squares – mobile library service
- Yellow squares – children's services
- Orange squares – young people's service
- Burgundy/brown squares – seniors' services



General marketing material

Using this concept as the basis of our marketing approach, we have adapted it for a range of information brochures. For example, yellow is the colour associated with library

services for children and parents. Potentially, we could use a coordinating colour scheme for feature walls in the children's area of each of our branches, thus minimising the need for signage and transcending language barriers. Library users familiar with the YPRL colour-code will quickly identify the children's area.



Preschool Storytime logo

Other publications using the mosaic squares include in-house posters, bi-monthly activity brochures, and staff power points.

A further development of this strategy has been our use of mascot logos to identify our six core children's programs in printed material and in some branches. The aim is to engage children and to inform parents of the range of programs on offer. The mascot logos are:

- A kangaroo and its joey for *Bookaroo*
- A baby koala for *Baby Storytime*
- A kookaburra for *Tinytots*
- A cockatoo for *Toddler Time*
- An echidna for *Preschool Storytime*
- A platypus for *Just4Kids*

This sub-branding strategy has now been extended to other programs, such as *Yarra Plenty Reads*, *Beside Reads*, *Finding MY Place*, *Market Place of Ideas*, and *A Taste of Web 2.0*. A style guide has been prepared to ensure a uniformity of approach.

With the YPRL image clearly and consistently implemented throughout its eight branches and two mobile libraries, the library is a highly visible presence within the community. The success of this branding exercise is reflected in an increase in attendance in programs by over 15%. For our community, the library is a valuable resource, and an interesting destination.

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