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### **Practical Marketing for Your School Library by C.L. Mansfield, London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2025, 200 pp., \$35.96, Ebook (EPub and PDF).**

**Reviewed by Barbie Keiser**

According to Hong Kong-based author Corinna L. Mansfield, school libraries must have short-term goals while also planning for the long term. Drawing on her experience as an international school librarian, Mansfield believes library decisions should be data-driven with specific metrics measured through a “sustained effort to solicit, collect and use feedback” (p.6). She uses the 20 chapters of *Practical Marketing for Your School Library* to explain how school librarians can effectively market their libraries. Throughout the text, the author encourages school libraries to create detailed and strategic marketing plans that engage target audiences and use data to communicate the library’s value to stakeholders (p.7).

Mansfield recognizes that “technology has fundamentally changed how students, teachers, and communities consume information and engage with educational resources.” Consequently, the promotional tactics used by school librarians must evolve to meet user expectations and behaviors. The book details how, by adapting proven marketing practices from the business world to the school library context, librarians can “position the library as an essential, innovative partner across the school community” (p.7).

The transformation process begins with a focused marketing plan. “Using real, robust data about library users, library facilities and circulation trends, the effectiveness of your school library program can be demonstrated in terms that everyone can understand” (p.8). According to Mansfield, the effective

marketing plan begins with a review of the current situation regarding marketing materials, programming, and planning. The plan continues with an analysis of the impact of a school library that answers the following questions:

1. Who advocates for your library?
2. What are other libraries doing and how does your library compare?
3. Are there collaboration opportunities?

These analyses will help position your library for continuous improvement, including the skills needed to meet challenges and the budget for new initiatives (p. 10-11).

Each chapter of *Practical Marketing for Your School Library* begins with “Questions to ask yourself” about the topic. They include examples, such as vision statements (Chapter 2) and demographic segmentation and personae (Chapter 3), and worksheets, such as the user profile template (p.31).

Explanations of tools familiar to school librarians, such as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, are compared with business analysis techniques, such as the SWOT analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats; balanced scorecard; and the fishbone diagram. The explanations are designed to not intimidate the uninitiated (Chapter 4).

Beginning with Chapter 5, the work shifts from strategy to tactics, informing the reader how to create a distinctive brand identity, develop a strategic marketing plan (Chapter 6), use technology to support marketing efforts (Chapter 7), and create engaging content for library newsletters and websites (Chapter 8). Chapter 9 identifies the hallmarks of an impactful program and event. Chapters 10-12 address how school libraries can cultivate strategic partnerships (10), collaborate with teachers (11), and develop library initiatives (12).

Measuring marketing success requires metrics. In Chapter 13, Mansfield highlights the importance of quantitative alongside qualitative measures. The author emphasizes the *Library as Place*, physical and online, in Chapter 14. Resourcing for success includes developing a budget to support the school library's marketing efforts (Chapter 15). For those unfamiliar with finance terminology, such as "return on Investment," the author provides examples from a typical library and guides the user through the analysis of typical library programs and questions to ask participants to help stakeholders decide whether the program should continue, be modified, or be discontinued.

Chapter 16 describes library programs for specific user groups, such as neurodiverse or special needs students. Readers are encouraged to adapt these programs for their libraries. The case studies in Chapter 17 are easy-to-read marketing plans that explain a "current situation," identify challenges, and detail strategies and solutions.

Chapter 18 shifts to long-term library calendar planning of displays and activities for the academic year. This is followed by a chapter of lesson plans (19). The final chapter consists of seven sessions designed to test and reinforce the concepts developed in the text so school librarians can apply the lessons to their specific-situations.

This work is one of the most practical library marketing texts. The author demystifies marketing to improve school libraries and ease the burden of school librarians. There are few good library marketing books for school libraries. This is certainly one of them.

### **About the author**

Barbie Keiser is an information resources management (IRM) consultant. Ms. Keiser has created and reengineered libraries and information centers, managed academic and corporate libraries, and worked as a reference and instruction librarian. A frequent speaker at library, information, and business conferences, worldwide, Barbie is also a prolific author. She writes the AI

Column in *Computers in Libraries* magazine, is a frequent *Information Today* and a co-author of *Marketing Library Services: A Nuts-and-Bolts Approach*. Barbie received her MSLS from Case Western Reserve University.

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