

***Library marketing and communications:  
Strategies to increase relevance and results***

*Cordelia Anderson*

**Reviewed by Barbie Keiser**

Barbie Keiser, Inc.

***Library marketing and communications: strategies to increase relevance and results* by Cordelia Anderson, Chicago, IL: ALA Editions, 2020, 176pp., \$49.99, ISBN- 978-0-8389-4799-9 (paper)**

Despite the plethora of print collateral that libraries develop—flyers, posters, promotional bookmarks, and signs—communities are often unaware of the programs and services their libraries offer. This extraordinarily practical volume will help librarians think strategically, understand the importance of marketing and public relations, and create effective marketing and communications plans.

At the outset, Cordelia Anderson provides a rationale for why library funds are so frequently cut: Officials don't understand what the library contributes to the vitality of a community. This former director of marketing and communications for Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (North Carolina), now CEO of Cordelia Anderson Consulting ([www.cordeliaandersonapr.com](http://www.cordeliaandersonapr.com)), recommends that libraries tell "their stories... communicating relevance in a way that ensures their sustainability." (p. x)

In 11 chapters, Anderson demonstrates how librarians can determine the stories about their libraries that will result in increased funding, expanded usage, and a better understanding of the library's vital role in society. Besides addressing those responsible for library marketing and communications, the author includes much to engage library directors and senior managers. The Questions to ask, Follow-up callout boxes interspersed throughout the text, and relevant examples, such as basic key messages (Chapter 2) and survey questions (Chapter 5), may be the most compelling reasons to purchase this volume.

Public Relations, Marketing, and Promotion, explaining the marketing and communications function, serves as a good foundation for those considering where to begin on their road to developing a coordinated effort for identifying target market needs and wants. Chapter 1 details the research steps necessary for analyzing prior promotional efforts to engage library communities and determine what went right/wrong in the past.

Chapter 2 presents the questions that need answers if one wishes to create a strategic marketing and communications plan. The most important question is “What’s in it for them,” meaning your library’s users or customers. Starting with Research identifies the valuable data to collect that will inform your operations and help you create a strategic marketing and communications plan: Identify audiences, their needs and wants; create key messages; and identify channels available to reach your audiences. The chapter reviews various research methods for data gathering (e.g., focus groups, surveys) and presents sample key messages. Anderson advises libraries to segment their audiences into three buckets (internal, external, and funding stakeholders), showing how the PESO method (Paid, Earned, Social, and Owned) identifies channels for reaching library audiences.

Developing a marketing and communications plan (Chapter 3) reviews the components of the marketing plan, along with examples of measurable objectives, strategies, tactics, and activities that align with overall goals. A fill-in template can help librarians get started on their library’s plan. Anderson stresses the importance of distinguishing a library’s overall strategic marketing plan from communications plans developed to support specific projects.

In Customers and the Marketing Funnel (Chapter 4), Anderson discusses the original four stages of a customer’s relationship with an organization, AIDA - Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action, expanded with additional steps in the marketing funnel, including consideration, evaluation, decision, repeat, loyalty, and advocacy. Here, the author discusses holes in the marketing funnel that libraries typically encounter; she recommends a holistic analytic approach for addressing what’s missing in the following chapter (5), Fixing the Funnel.

Branding Libraries is not a new phenomenon. In Chapter 6, the author explains the components of a brand: Beliefs, story, and promise. “For a fully realized brand,” your

library must live by your beliefs, including the library's vision, mission, and core values (p. 66). Anderson reminds the reader that libraries are not their services, the number of branches, or the size of their collections. A library's story should be about how users' lives are changed because your library exists. A brand promise is the experience users expect each time they interact with the library: In-person, on the phone, or online. The author encourages libraries to document how staff delivers on the library's promises.

Storytelling is an art. Anderson furnishes the reader with three examples of what works well for telling the library's story:

- The positive "what if" story is aspirational, based on what you would do to improve your community if money was not an issue
- The negative "what if" story envisions the community without the library
- The more common story relates to the positive impacts the library has had on an individual or group. Here, the author presents examples from different types of libraries and customers.

Whatever you do, Anderson recommends speaking to both the heart and the head. She closes Chapter 7 by identifying several "internal barriers that prevent libraries from telling their stories in a meaningful, strategic, or efficient way" (p. 84).

Chapter 8 emphasizes the importance of partnerships as a marketing and communications strategy. The author suggests that the library explores what existing partners could contribute to the library's marketing and communication effort. She walks the reader through creating a formal partnership using a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and how to talk about the partnership to the press and your audiences.

Anderson appreciates how helpful partnerships can be when it comes to advocating for libraries (Chapter 9). Chapter 10 is designed to help a library manage its reputation and communicate during a crisis.

In the book's final chapter (11), the author presents optimal Staffing and Organizational Structure for accomplishing the best practices for library marketing and communications. The work concludes with a summary of what libraries have learned in the past decade, including the impacts of the great recession and technology disruptions. I'd like to have read more about how "libraries are ideally situated" for

helping “people come together in neutral spaces” (p. 150). This topic deserves another chapter with the careful treatment Anderson gave to the rest of the book---perhaps in a second edition of the work.

## About the Reviewer

**Barbie Keiser** (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0027-5795>) 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. Barbie teaches Competitive Intelligence (CI) in the dual-degree MBA-MSIS program at Johns Hopkins University Carey Business School and to undergraduate students online for the School of Communications, University of Kentucky. She also teaches Knowledge Management to librarians via Library Juice Academy. A frequent speaker at library, information, and business conferences, worldwide, Barbie is also a prolific author. Known for her column in *ONLINE Searcher* magazine and frequent Information Today NewsBreaks ([newsbreaks.infotoday.com](https://newsbreaks.infotoday.com)), Barbie is a co-author of *Marketing Library Services: A Nuts-and-Bolts Approach* and has turned the print work into a series of workshops for librarians, information specialists, and information providers (database vendors) offered around the world. Barbie received her MSLS from Case Western Reserve University.



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