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Marketing Your Library: Thinking Outside the Box

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Marketing Your Library: Thinking Outside the Box

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BY: Marcia Dority Baker | November 24, 2015 at 11:15 AM **TOPICS:** marketing, law libraries, budget, time

“Marketing” is a ubiquitous term applied to almost anything. Market your brand. Market your name. Market your product. Market your library. “Market your library” sounds a bit odd – maybe because in academia we don’t think we need to market our library. We’re a firmly established part of the institution. We may change over time, but it’s unlikely we’ll disappear, and any “marketing” we do probably will not result in more funding from our parent institution. But marketing, even in academia, is important because it helps advertise the value we bring to our institutions. We’ve been talking about Marketing a lot over the past few years in presentations (e.g., “Twenty Dollars a Day: Marketing Your Library in Challenging Economic Times”, Marcia Dority Baker and Stefanie Pearlman, MAALL Annual Meeting, 2009) and in articles (e.g., “Tweet Treats”, 14 *AALL Spectrum* 18, 2009) and would like to revisit the topic and offer new suggestions. Marketing is frequently associated with large outputs of money and long, highly strategized advertising campaigns. Are there ways to market without investing large sums of cash and placing high demands on your library’s time or space? Sure. At the Schmid Law Library we market our library in a number of relatively inexpensive – money, time and space – ways. Our marketing has helped us establish ourselves as an important part of our law school community.

We’d like to share some of our strategies. Borrowing from review services like Yelp and TripAdvisor, we’ll briefly outline what we do, then provide codes indicating how much money (\$), library space (△), and staff time (·) was involved to help you decide if any of these activities could help you market your library. The codes relate as follows:

\$0-25 (\$)	Very little space (△)	Less than 1 hour (·)
\$26-50 (\$\$)	Foyer or room (△△)	1-3 hours (··)
\$51-100 (\$\$\$)	More than a room, less than a floor (△△△)	Half a day (···)
\$101-300 (\$\$\$\$)	A floor (△△△△)	One day (····)
\$301-??? (\$\$\$\$\$)	The entire library (△△△△△)	More than 1 day (·····)

Art Show

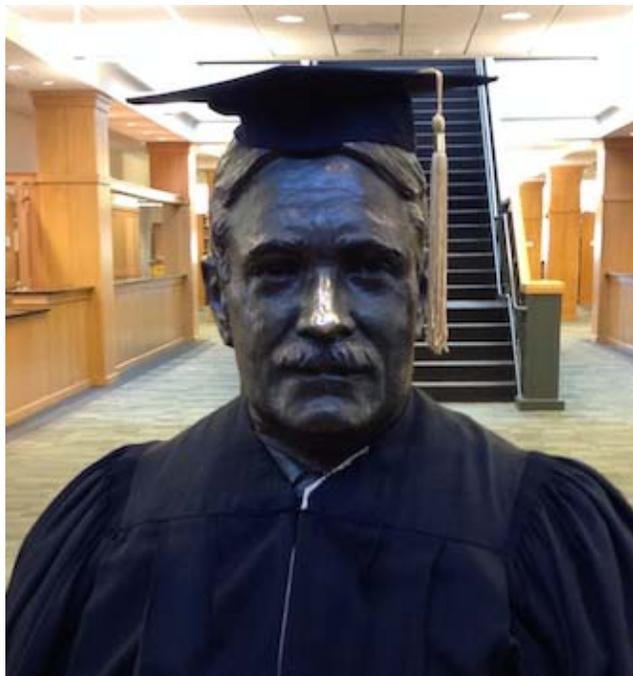
This year we used some blank wall space to host two art exhibits. The first show displayed faculty and staff work; the second the work of our law students. The initial cost was high since we invested in a good art hanging system. After that initial expense, the ongoing costs are relatively small and amount to staff time organizing each show and minimal printing costs. Specifically: email requests for art; collecting and hanging the art; printing labels and gallery guides; and advertising the show through emails and social media. We also spent more money with the first show by hosting an opening reception. We’ve given high money costs only because of the initial investment in the hanging system and the reception. A less expensive show could be hosted by using easels, display cases or other display options. CAVEAT: we have a relatively secure environment. If you are concerned about art theft or damage, you may want to display the

works in secure areas or locked cabinets.

\$\$\$\$ △△ ..

Roscoe Pound

We're sure you're wondering how Roscoe Pound and library marketing connect. Six degrees of Kevin Bacon anyone?? There are three fabulous busts of Nebraska alum Roscoe Pound: one at the Nebraska State Capital, one at Harvard Law School Library (Dean from 1916-1936), and one in the Schmid Law Library (Dean from 1903-1907). We have two traditions revolving around our bust of Dean Pound: (1) law students rub his nose for good luck, and (2) graduating classes, with varying degrees of participation, make "offerings" to him before finals. We've build upon both of those student oriented traditions by decorating the bust throughout the year to showcase events happening at the law school, at the university, or for holidays. The law school community enjoys seeing Roscoe decked out - in a mortar board and gown for example – and he is frequently photographed with students, especially when "dressed" for a specific occasion.



\$ △ .

Lawmaste

We have a nice, large space in our basement occupied by three study tables. Because the space is open, relatively private and easily accessible, a group of students asked if they use it for a weekly yoga class during the academic year. The students explored other spaces in the law college and found the library basement to be the largest, quietest and perhaps most convenient for their purpose. With some trepidation about the impact the classes would have on studying, we gave the okay. It has been a positive experiment with no complaints. Each class runs approximately 90 minutes, and the students are great about returning the tables and chairs to the appropriate places after each class. This is "free" in the sense that our only output is space - no cost, no staff time, no advertising.

△△△△

Community Coffees

We like to host community coffees once a semester. We purchase fruit, breakfast treats, coffee and tea. We set up a table in our foyer and "meet, greet and serve" students, faculty and staff until the food runs out – usually from around 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Our community truly enjoys the coffees, and we get many heartfelt "thank yous" – especially from those students who didn't have time for breakfast. The cost of the food, the time getting the food, setting and cleaning up are the biggest "expenses" we incur.

\$\$\$\$ △△ ...

Tweet Treats

During finals in the fall and spring, two of our librarians do "tweet treats" in the library. They promote library services via clues, hide a

treat (usually a theater box of candy), and tweet the clue. The first student reading the tweet and figuring out the clue finds the treat. It's a nice, inexpensive way to provide a study break for students during finals. It's also had the added benefit of increasing the number of students following the law library on Twitter.

\$ △ .

Mini Golf

At the University of Nebraska College of Law we celebrate Mel Shinn Day every fall. A 5k "Race Judicata" memorializing Mel Shinn, a member of the class of 1966 who enjoyed athletics while in law school, is run annually. In addition to the race, we have an all school picnic and students can participate in a number of athletic events – the 5k, bowling, bocce ball, basketball. Approximately 10 years ago we decided to contribute to the festivities by hosting a 9-hole golf course *in the library*. Using packing materials accumulated during the year, old computer equipment, discarded books and a variety of other materials gathered from the library (or home), we set up nine uniquely themed holes. Initially we borrowed putters and balls from a local miniature golf course. Now, through the efforts of one of our librarians (who scoured local thrift stores), we have our own putters and golf balls. Although we did purchase golf pencils for scoring, all signage and score cards are created in house with supplies we have on hand. The course is set up the day before Mel Shinn, and we run "tee times" from approximately 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The course is a success each fall, and we frequently get requests to set it up at least once more during the year. The most "expensive" part of the event is the time involved setting up the course and taking it down.

\$ △△△△ △△△△

ResearchPaloosa

Like almost every other academic law library, we struggle to send our students out into the work world confident with their research skills. To help hone their skills, we host an all-day research review the Thursday or Friday after the last final in the spring, offering 45 or 60 minute legal research sessions. We advertise via email, create a LibGuide, and provide donuts and lunch (pizza for example) for participants. The feedback from the event is positive, and we like offering our students a research refresher before they begin work. The biggest costs are our time preparing the sessions, advertising the event, and the food.

\$\$\$ △△

Orientation Bingo

One of the events we've experimented with in the past and hope to reintroduce is Orientation Bingo. Our Director learned of a version of this while visiting at Harvard Law School, and we've adapted for 1L orientation. We created Bingo cards using different library departments as the squares on the grid. Working from a picture of the bust of Roscoe Pound, our IT department printed nine differently colored stickers. Students fill their cards with a different colored sticker from each law library department. We solicit gift card donations from local businesses, and use those as prizes for the students; full bingo cards are deposited in a drawing to win those prizes. It's a nice way to introduce ourselves to the students and promote local businesses.

\$ △△△△△ ..

The Great Pumpkin

The Great Pumpkin is legendary with our alums. It started with a simple orange, plastic Halloween pumpkin full of candy at the reference desk. It evolved into a tradition of a candy at the reference desk during various times throughout the year. Students get a sugar infusion and an opportunity to visit with the librarians. When the pumpkin is out, it's decorated in a way befitting the time of the year: a bunny in spring; an "election hat" and "vote" sign during elections; earmuffs in January; a turkey close to Thanksgiving. It's relatively inexpensive and a great way to encourage interaction between students and the librarians.

\$ △ .

Takeaway

Marketing your library and promoting your services can be done creatively on a budget. Each of these ideas came about because we wanted to try something new (art show) or be more involved in law school events (Mel Shinn; orientation). We hope our ideas inspire you to "market" your library in a different way. Let your creativity out. Get rid of those stale marketing plans. Demonstrate the value your library provides to your institution.

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