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### Marketing and Librarians

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# Marketing and librarians

*By Yeo Pin Pin*

Barbie Keiser, Information Resource Management Consultant, conducted a one day workshop titled "Substance beyond style: Marketing library and information services in the 21st century" in Singapore on 15 October. The workshop was organized by the Library Association of Singapore and the Singapore Management University. It was held at the Reading Room, Li Ka Shing Library, Singapore Management University. Ms. Keiser noted that she did her first marketing workshop in Singapore in 1989 and was pleased to be back twenty years later.

How has marketing in libraries progressed over the years in Singapore? Twenty years ago, librarians promoted their libraries using a smaller array of communication channels like printed posters and newsletters. At that time, the physical collections were of paramount importance.

From the experience shared by the group of over 40 librarians who attended the workshop, it is clear that librarians today are certainly more aware of the need to market the library, to reach and to serve their clients. Besides print media, libraries are communicating with their users via email, SMS and the internet. The range of activities offered includes orientation, instruction, events, promotions - especially of electronic resources - contests, and electronic alert services. Librarians want to improve further on their existing efforts to reach non-users, and to show that they offer value to their clients.

Ms. Keiser emphasized the bigger picture. She touched on several processes including needs assessment, information audit, market opportunity analysis and the 4 Ps of marketing (Product, Place, Price and Promotion). She focused on the importance of planning by helping participants to draft a marketing plan. She also asked the participants to estimate their time spent on different activities and to think about what can be eliminated, reduced or designated to others to make space for new marketing activities.

Some tips from Ms Keiser included making sure to align information products to the organizational mission, goals and objectives and to target a specific group. It is important to review the product range to stay relevant, and to ensure that the most important market segments are being served. She also recommends including marketing in the job description of all staff. She strongly believes that it is the library staff who contribute to the success of marketing and delivering information products and services.

*Yeo Pin Pin is the Research Librarian, Social Sciences, Li Ka Shing Library, Singapore Management University.*



*Ms. Barbie Keiser at her marketing workshop*

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