

Public relations in librarianship

Diana Rylatt believes it's time we got off our butts!

There is a need for a concerted campaign of Public Relations in librarianship. I think it is time that we got off our butts, publicised ourselves, our profession-

area and do you actively promote this idea? Do you seek involvement in the running of your organisation; volunteer for selection panels, review panels, internal training pro-

am...so is the library! The library is not bound by the physical constraints of four walls.

My library is the most requested place to visit on induction tours for new staff. Also, more established staff now request refamiliarisation tours of the library—perhaps due to recent departmental initiatives which have reduced some staffs' 'comfort levels'.

The library offers lunchtime screenings of newly acquired videos to all staff, with our posters promoting them on notice boards throughout the building.

What do your clients want?

When establishing my library, I conducted a marketing exercise to discover my clients' expectations. In continuing consultation, I have developed an equitable service that doesn't discriminate against outposted clients. All clients receive information simultaneously through paper and electronic bulletins. Australia Post overnight courier services eliminate the 'tyranny of distance' for outposted staff. Positive feedback indicates that my departmental staff have a sense of ownership of the library...it's THEIR library!

Key stakeholders benefit from a targeted information package. I attend meetings developing new departmental projects, and the training section tees up library activities to complement training programs.

Promote yourself first as a professional...but be sure that you can deliver the goods. One of the hardest words for librarians to say is 'no', but in saying 'no' I always try to suggest how the clients can obtain the information they need.

Try never to apologise!!!...rather give them a positive message. No matter what sort of library you are in, promote it as a business and always try to get the professional message across. PR does not necessarily have to cost big dollars. If you apply your skills to the organisation, are professional at all times, don't promise what you can't deliver and run your library like a business, then you will be on your way to establishing successful public relations.

Diana Rylatt is the Librarian, Department of Human Services and Health, Queensland.



Diana Rylatt

alism, the skills we have to offer (and they are considerable), our libraries and the products and services we offer. How do we do this,...through a concerted and planned public relations campaign both individually and through ALIA.

I understand PR as Performance (P) plus Recognition (R). Communication is the underlying key to successful library PR.

There is a confusion between the roles of marketing and public relations in organisations. To put it succinctly:

- the purpose of PR is to manage IMAGE;
- the purpose of marketing is to manage DEMAND.

I believe that our skills base in retrieving and organising information is a PR tool that Librarians can apply to all facets of an organisation. The librarians in our department involve themselves in all information retrieval aspects of our department. We have developed a departmental thesaurus to be used in information retrieval and have been involved in the development of training modules to assist in its implementation. We have also helped to develop a document management strategy for the department.

What skills base do you have?

Does your organisation perceive you to be the manager of a discrete

grams etc? I know this is hard when you are under-resourced, but I believe that librarians have to promote themselves as total professionals who have something to offer the organisation besides traditional librarianship and library services.

Organisations rely on written material to communicate with their clients. This can be annual reports, catalogues, employee newsletters, posters, fliers, etc. These are the traditional PR tools, but what about briefing papers, strategic plans? In preparing such material, we have to consider function, aesthetics and cost. In my library we have our own 'With compliments' slips, interlibrary loan covers, a library 'post-it', envelope folders for sending out information and our brochure detailing library services. When we respond to an inquiry we enclose a book mark with the response to remind the client of our good service.

How is your profile?

I try to keep a high profile in my department, travelling between floors, delivering material, when I know that I could send the material by internal mail. This definitely generates work—it helps uncover new departmental publications which are not automatically sent to the library, promotes me personally, and more importantly brings the library to the client. I maintain that where I