


Creating Your Library Brand

Communicating Your Relevance and
Value to Your Patrons



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Contents



Preface vii

How to Use This Book xi

1	Defining Marketing and Branding	1
2	Why Brand?	11
3	Who Should Be Involved in Branding?	16
4	The Ideal Brand	25
5	The Brand Audit	31
6	The Story: Defining Your Message	38
7	The Visuals: Attention-Grabbing Support for Your Message	50
8	Brand Standards, Brand Advocates, and Marketing	59
9	How to Work with Outside Help	65
10	Evaluating Your Brand: Short-Term and Long-Term	75
11	Maintaining Your Brand	81
12	Blogs and Brands	87
13	Common Pitfalls and False Assumptions	93
Appendix A	Case Studies	99
Appendix B	Words to Describe Your Library and What Makes It Unique	111
	Glossary	113
	Acknowledgments	117
	Index	119

■ 1 ■

Defining Marketing and Branding

One of the questions librarians often ask me is, “What are marketing and branding and how do they relate to each other?” *Marketing* is a term used by librarians to mean many different things and therefore has become confusing. *Branding* is a term that is just coming into use in libraries and as a result, very few librarians have a clear understanding of what it means and how it is different from marketing. Therefore, this chapter will focus on defining marketing and branding and identifying how they relate to each other in the library environment. The objective is to establish a common vocabulary and language that can be used throughout the rest of this book.

At its simplest level, marketing is the process of (1) identifying the potential audience that you want to hear your library’s story, (2) developing that story so that those potential users understand what makes your library unique and why they will find it interesting, and (3) developing ways of telling the story that will intrigue those users and attract their attention (see figure 1).

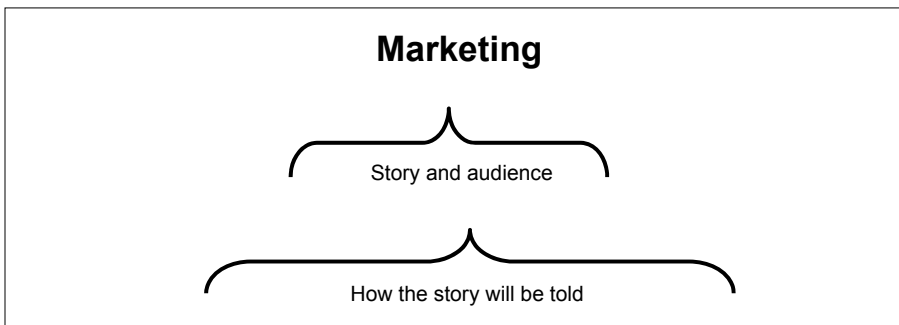


Figure 1 What is marketing? Marketing at its simplest level

The first part of the marketing process (identifying who you want to hear the library’s story [the audience] and then developing the story) is planning that is done before any actual marketing is put into motion. Therefore, it is called *marketing strategy* (*strategy* being defined as a series of plans developed to achieve a specific goal). The results of the second part of the process (developing and implementing tools to tell the story in a compelling manner) are referred to as *marketing tactics*—actions taken to publicize a product in the marketplace (see figure 2). The following sections offer brief summaries of each of the components of marketing strategy and marketing tactics, and thus provide an overview of the entire marketing process. More information about each component can be found in any book about the marketing process within the general business literature.

Marketing Strategy

The elements of marketing strategy include setting objectives for marketing, identifying who might want to use the library (segmenting), defining those to whom the library’s story is going to be told (targeting), defining the library’s story (branding), and doing market research to test assumptions about the relevance of the library’s story.

Setting Objectives

As in any other strategic process it is important to set objectives, or goals, for the marketing process. Objectives identify what you want to have happen as



Figure 2 Marketing strategy and tactics: How marketing strategy and tactics work together

a result of the entire marketing process. Most libraries pursue one of three marketing objectives: (1) to bring new users into the library, (2) to have existing users come to the library more often, or (3) to do both—bring in new users and have existing users come more often. Each of these objectives will require a different set of marketing tools. Hence, it is crucial to define clearly which one your library wants most to achieve. To be able to measure your success you will also need to make sure that your objective is quantifiable—for example, “to increase the number of new library users by 10 percent over the course of one fiscal year.”

Segmenting

To segment your market, you need to identify the total universe of individuals who might use your product, such as all existing library users in the city of Brunswick, and then break that universe into smaller segments, such as mothers with kids under the age of five, that you can study to understand if they might be interested in your product. Segmenting may be done in many different ways. Demographic segmenting is the identification of fairly large groups by demographic factors such as age, gender, income, or geographic location. Groups may also be segmented by shared interests (iPod owners, marathoners, artists). Marketers use segmenting because it helps them gain a more detailed understanding of smaller groups that have something in common. The more detailed understanding in turn helps them decide if they want to try to sell their product to that specific group.

Branding

Branding is one component of marketing strategy. Branding is the process of defining a library’s story, distilling that into one short, appealing sentence that tells the whole story, and then visually conveying the story via the library’s logo and other branding elements.



Frequently Asked Question

What is a brand?

Technically, a brand is a mark, or logo, combined with specific colors and fonts that identifies a particular product or service to potential users. More generally, a brand is shorthand for the story that an organization wants to tell potential users about how it can meet a need in their lives.

But what is the *story*? A library's story is the articulation of the role it plays or wants to play in its community. To create a powerful story, the library needs to identify a role that no one else can duplicate. The story is meant to inform anyone considering using the library about what makes it special and worth visiting. The story can be about the details of the library (great customer service, a large collection, a beautiful building), or it can be about the needs that the library could fill in the lives of its patrons. The story might be that the library is a place where a community connects and comes together. It might be the intellectual center of a small town. It could be the tool that parents use to give their kids a head start in life. It could be the center of campus life for a college or a place where a student can feel part of a community at a large university. Any one of these stories would be compelling to people thinking of using the library. They are powerful definitions of what makes the library relevant and important in its community.

It is imperative to remember that as a library develops its story, it should check back with its patrons and potential users to make sure that its story is not only unique but also relevant and meaningful. It is great to say that a library has the largest serials collection in the county, but if potential users do not care about serials, then that story has no relevance and will not help make the library attractive. A meaningful story will motivate potential patrons to come to the library because they are seeking what the library provides. Chapter 6 offers tools to help a library define its special story and then evaluate the relevance of that story.

Having a clear, compelling story is essential to a library's marketing efforts, but equally critical is the library brand look, that is, the visual representation of the library and its story. The look is seen in the library's logo and its colors, specific typefaces that might be used in written publications, pictures of the library building, library cards, name tags worn by staff—any visual representation of the library and its services. The look should support the library's story. This means that if a library story is about the innovation and excitement to be found there, the look cannot be presented in dull colors coupled with a sedate logo and stodgy typesetting. The story and the look must work together. When they do, they become powerful tools that quickly convey a great deal of information to current and potential users. Consistent use of the same typography also can trigger memory, thereby helping people remember and quickly recognize written materials from the library.

It is important to understand that a logo and a brand are not the same thing. A logo is one piece of a brand, albeit the most important piece. A logo is a visual shortcut that identifies an organization, sometimes by using the organization's name (think of the Dunkin' Donuts logo), sometimes by using visual imagery that relates to the organization (think of the Nike swoosh).

A brand comprises many elements in addition to a logo. A brand is made up of the logo, the brand's colors, the typeface used when spelling out the brand name, the brand tagline (Lucius Beebe Memorial Library: Where Wakefield Connects), signage inside and outside the library, name tags that library staff wear, and library cards. A brand is also made up of any experience that an individual might have with the organization. This includes interactions with staff, perceptions of materials in the library, and even simple things such as the availability of parking near the library. All of those things make up a library brand.

Targeting

One of the first phrases that you will hear as you start to become familiar with branding is *target audience*. A target audience is a specific group of people that you want to hear and respond to your branding message. If you were marketing a product (like a new soap or a new car), the whole world would essentially be your potential audience. However, you know that you cannot talk to everyone because you do not have the money to do that much marketing. Consequently, you want your message to be heard by the audience most likely to be interested in your product and be moved to buy it after hearing your advertising. That would be your target audience. By defining a group that will be the focus of your marketing, you can make sure that your message is meaningful and relevant, that it is couched in language your audience will understand, and that it is presented in a place where they are likely to hear it.

Some may wonder how targeting applies to libraries and if libraries need to identify a target audience before they start their branding work. My perspective is that targeting can be a very useful tool for libraries as they develop their message. In the past most libraries tried to craft a message that would get people who had never used the library to try it out, and they just assumed that current patrons would continue to use the library. Today more libraries are understanding that they need to maintain a constant dialogue with their existing users even while they continue to talk with new, potential users. Consequently they have redefined their target audience (and revised their brand message) to encompass this expanded group of both current users and nonusers.

However, some libraries have decided that with limited resources, it is not worth spending the majority of their marketing time and energy getting new users in the door. Rather, they now focus their resources on making sure they are meeting the needs of their current patrons and hope that by doing so they will increase that group's satisfaction and use of the library. Libraries follow different targeting strategies, and those differences have an impact on how they approach their branding.

To identify the best target audience for your library, you need to start by honestly assessing your current library users. Consider the following questions:

- If you are a public library, what percentage of your community has library cards? Who uses your virtual library and for what purposes?
- If you are an academic library, what percentage of students use the library, either virtually or by taking books out?
- Does your community support your library? How do you know—through financial support, through feedback you get from community surveys, or through some other mechanism?
- Is your community aware of the services offered by your library? Again, how do you obtain that information?

Bottom line, through these questions you are trying to understand how much support and use your library receives. If you already have a very strong base of support, then you can probably afford to focus your branding and marketing efforts on current library users such as moms with kids, teenagers, and senior citizens. In this situation you might focus on reinforcing what library users already know about your library—for example, that it is the center of the community and provides learning and connection for people of all ages. If your levels of support and nonsupport are about equal, you probably need to talk to both users and nonusers if you hope to increase your overall library usage because the current group of users is not large enough. If your library has very low support in your community, then you are probably going to focus the majority of your energy on nonusers, demonstrating to them how and why the library is important and why it matters in your community. Your objective in this case is to bring more users into the library.

Market Research

Market research is an important component of any branding or marketing effort. I always say that market research is your library's opportunity to have a dialogue with a large number of your users. You would probably prefer to have that conversation one-on-one if you could. However, that is never possible, so market research is the next best option. Today, market research encompasses a huge number of tools, including interviews, focus groups, surveys, computer analytics—the list goes on and on. The objective of market research is to conduct a “conversation” with a specific group of consumers that will reveal their thoughts about a product or a service. This helps a library (or a company) determine which marketing strategies and tactics make sense to and are likely to have an impact on potential customers.

Marketing Tactics

Marketing tactics are, by and large, more familiar to librarians than marketing strategy. Promotion, advertising, direct marketing, public relations, and sales are all marketing tactics.

Promotion

A promotion is any effort that an organization engages in to develop awareness about a specific activity. A promotion can be as simple as printing out a flyer about a speaker at the library and putting it on a community bulletin board or as complicated as conducting a citywide campaign to ensure that all citizens obtain a library card. Both are meant to increase public knowledge about a library activity. Libraries are generally well aware of promotions and understand how they can be used to increase awareness about specific events.

Advertising

Advertising is the action of talking directly to possible users of your product to tell them how that product can fulfill a need in their lives. In the United States most of us are exposed to tremendous amounts of advertising on a daily basis, so we understand it well. However, because advertising, whether in print, via television or radio, or on the Internet, tends to be expensive, most libraries do not engage in much of it. Also, broadscale advertising (television in particular) aims to address a large percentage of the population, whereas libraries are typically more interested in talking with smaller subsets.

Direct Marketing

Direct marketing includes any form of communication (mail, Internet) that offers goods or services directly to consumers. Libraries tend not to do much direct marketing because it is generally seen as intrusive to send specific offers to library users and because there are not many situations in which specific offers would be appropriate.

Public Relations

Public relations (PR) is any activity that results in a third-party mention of your product or service. Generally the third party is a newspaper or magazine to which you have sent a story idea and that has followed up with a free article about your product or service or something happening at your organization. Libraries are generally quite good at public relations and understand how to use it to get free promotion of their activities.

Sales

The notion of sales is often viewed with distrust in the nonprofit environment. It brings to mind pictures of sleazy used-car salesmen pitching their product. In fact, sales is simply the process of matching a buyer and a seller. People who are talented at sales will not try to force a product on you that you do not want. Instead, their job is to understand what you want and then offer you an appropriate product or service. Sales does not play a huge role in the marketing of libraries, but it is useful to understand how it contributes to marketing in general.

The Complete Marketing Process

All the components of marketing strategy and marketing tactics together make up the complete marketing process (figure 3). Many library staff already use some marketing tactics. Promoting special programs, lectures, or events is something most libraries know how to do well. Libraries understand that unless the community is aware of an event, attendance will not be high enough to warrant the effort on the library's part. Public relations is also an activity that many libraries understand and execute; they get free publicity by sending out information on library programs and activities.

However, what is frequently missing from libraries' marketing efforts is a cohesive strategy based on clearly defined objectives and systematic segmenting, targeting, branding, and market research. Although marketing tactics may be implemented without a marketing strategy, and in libraries they often are, such efforts are highly likely to end up being disjointed or ineffective. Strategy can be thought of as a blueprint. A blueprint provides a contractor with a clear goal and shows what needs to be done to get a house built and to ensure that each room serves the purpose for which it is designed. It makes sure that subcontractors are all working toward the same end and that no one will build a ranch if a colonial is desired. Similarly, a marketing strategy sets a clear direction for everyone in the library, making sure that all tactics are designed to work toward the same goals.

Today, everyone leads a fast-paced life. That is one reason why brands have become ubiquitous. Well-known brands tell their stories quickly and effectively. Their messages are compelling and relevant, and their look is interesting and attention catching. A library's use of branding allows possible users to get fast, accurate information about the library's services without working too hard. It identifies what the library provides to its users *that they cannot get anywhere else*.



Figure 3 The marketing mix: All the elements of marketing

Having a consistent message and look that emphasize a library's uniqueness also ensures that all tactical marketing activities, such as promotions and public relations, follow a coherent and consistent approach. It helps everyone in the library to develop promotional materials that say the same thing about the library's role in the community. It also reinforces the library's visual identity, thus increasing the probability that potential users will be able to quickly identify materials as coming from the library. By repeating the same message and design over and over, the library can increase the likelihood that potential patrons will hear and absorb their message amid the clutter of all the other messages directed at them daily. People need to get the library's story very quickly. Otherwise it is unlikely that they will spend the time and energy to figure it out.



To summarize: Marketing and branding are *not* the same thing. Marketing is a multistep process that consists of both planning and implementation activities. Branding is one of the first steps in a marketing strategy. To develop its brand a library must first articulate a story that explains its role in the community and establishes its uniqueness. It must then find an exciting and attention-grabbing way to tell the story so that potential patrons cannot miss hearing and understanding it. A truly effective marketing process depends on successful branding.



Exercise

Objective

To help clarify the concept of branding for anyone involved in a library-branding project.

Activity

1. Participants should read chapter 1 to develop an understanding of the difference between marketing and branding.
2. Once the staff has read this chapter, ask each person to pick one of the organizations below (all of which are well branded) and spend several days looking at its marketing materials. The marketing can take any form—Internet, television, print, radio, billboards, and so forth.

Dunkin' Donuts

JetBlue Airways

McDonald's

Starbucks

Harley-Davidson

Disney

Mercedes-Benz

Volvo

Salvation Army

Red Cross

3. Once participants have found some marketing materials, ask them to review their materials to see if they can identify the organization's brand story and the basic elements of the brand look. Are the brand story and look consistent, or do they change to match the marketing materials? Develop a central location where the participants can comment on what they found and review what other staff members found. This can be as simple as a bulletin board or notebook in a staff common room, but you may find a virtual collaborative work space to be more effective. If your library does not have a virtual location, such as a staff blog or wiki, where staff can easily write ideas and thoughts to be shared with others, there are several free or low-cost online work spaces available, including PBwiki (<http://pbwiki.com>), Basecamp (www.basecamp.com), WebEx (www.webex.com), and activeCollab.com (www.activecollab.com).
4. Ask participants to look at examples of your library's marketing efforts. Can they identify your library's brand story and its look? If not, what is missing? Again ask them to post their results to a central location.
5. Finally, ask participants to start looking carefully at branding they see everyday—it is all around them. Ask them to post notes both when they see something that they think is effective and when they see something that does not work. There are no right or wrong answers here. The idea is to start building participants' awareness about branding and to have them think about good and bad branding.



Note: Page numbers in italics indicate definitions.

A

- absolutes, 54, *113*
 - academic libraries
 - assessment of current users, 6
 - evaluation of message, 40
 - faculty involvement, 16–17
 - marketing plan, 63–64
 - need for brand, 12
 - advertising, 7, *113*
 - advisory groups, 85, 90
 - Ann Arbor (Mich.) District Library, 92
 - Apple Computer brand, 25
 - art students as designers, 50–51
 - attribute branding, *113*
 - in brand message, 43–44
 - vs. emotional branding, 11–12
 - exercise, 15
 - audience. *See* target audience
 - audit. *See* brand audit
- ## B
- Beebe Memorial Library. *See* Lucius Beebe Memorial Library (Wakefield, Mass.)
 - beer company brands, 27
 - blogs, *113*
 - and building relationships with users, 85, 88–90
 - for Core Team, 22–23
 - exercise, 92
 - marketing of, 90–91
 - See also* Internet
 - board of library. *See* library board
 - Boston Public Library tagline, 45, 98

- brand advocate, *113*
 - overview, 61–63
 - role of, 96
 - and staff training, 81–82
 - use of blog by, 87–92
- brand ambassadors, 82–83
 - exercise, 86
- brand audit, 31–37, *113*
 - and evaluation of message, 39
 - exercises, 24, 37
- brand awareness, evaluation of, 75
- brand identity, *113*. *See also* visual identity of brand
- brand look, *113*
 - in marketing strategy, 8
 - See also* logos; visual identity of brand
- brand maintenance, 81–86
- brand message. *See* message of brand
- brand standards, *114*
 - design, 60–61
 - editorial, 59–60
 - exercise, 64
 - importance of, 96
- brand story, 3, 76. *See also* library story
- brand templates, 60–61, 82, *116*
- branding process
 - exercise, 98
 - fear of, x
 - participants in, 16–18
- brands, changes to. *See* brands, prior
- brands, characteristics of, 25–29
 - consistent use of, 28, 96
 - exercise, 30

brands, characteristics of (cont.)
 honesty of, 28–29, 36, 46–47, 89, 115
 message (*see* message of brand)
 visual identity, 4, 27–28, 32–33, 50–58, 60–61

brands, prior
 changes to, 22–23, 71
 and Checkpoint Team input, 21
 opposition of supporters of, 17
 phasing out, 63
 reuse of logo from, 28

brands and branding, 1, 114
 exercises, 10, 15
 importance of, viii–ix, 11–15
 introduction of new, 63
 in marketing strategy, 3–5
 pitfalls, 93–98
 as shorthand, 14
 types of, 11–12, 15

broadcast advertising, 7

Brunswick (Maine) library and community
 vision, 40

budget. *See* costs of branding

business books, 72

buzz, 47, 114

C

case statement, 21–22, 114

Checkpoint Team, 19, 20–21, 114

Coach purses, 82

Coca-Cola logo, 27

colors as brand, 5, 60

community
 in brand audit, 34–35
 in branding process, 17
 and message, 39–42
 surveys, 77, 78
 talking about brand to, 95
 as target audience, 5–6

computer analytics as market research,
 6

consideration sets, 13, 114

consistent use of brand, 28, 36

consultants, 65–74
 exercise, 74
 guidelines for working with, 66–68
 hiring of, 69–70
 payment schedule, 72

reasons for hiring, 65–66
 setting expectations for, 70–71
See also designers

Core Team, 114
 in brand audit, 32–33
 and brand message, 41–43
 and creative brief, 54
 and designer, 56
 selection of, 18, 20
 working with, 21–23

Core Team exercises
 blogging, 92
 brand ambassador, 86
 brand standards, 64
 branding process, 98
 what makes a brand, 30
 writing taglines, 44–46

costs of branding
 and consultants, 65–66, 71–72
 consultants, additional costs, 70–71
 for logo, 52, 54
 marketing plan, 64
 printing of materials, 52
 and targeting of message, 46

creative brief, 51, 53–54, 114

cultural organizations, 17. *See also* community

current users as target audience, 5.
See also users

D

decision making by consumers and consideration sets, 13–14

deliverables, 53, 71–72, 114

demographic segmenting, 115. *See also* segmenting of market; target audience

design standards, 53, 60–61, 82

designers
 communicating with, 55–57
 evaluating portfolio, 52, 115
 finding, 50–52
 selection of, 97
See also consultants

differences in messages, 26–27

direct marketing, 7

donors, major, 17, 19

Dunkin' Donuts brand, 4, 28

E

editorial standards, 59–60, 82
 education about marketing, 72
 emotional branding, 115
 vs. attribute branding, 11–12
 in brand message, 43–44
 exercise, 15
 emotional needs, evaluation of, 84
 evaluation of branding plan, 75–80, 83–84
 evaluation of existing library brand. *See*
 brand audit
 evaluation of library services in branded
 environment, 14
 evaluation of message, 39
 exercises
 brand ambassadors, 86
 brand audit, 37
 brand standards, 64
 branding process, 98
 clarifying the concept of branding/
 building awareness, 10
 designer feedback, 58
 developing a survey, 79–80
 difference between types of branding,
 15
 evaluation of existing branding
 materials, 24
 library blogs, 92
 taglines, 48–49
 understanding what makes a brand, 30
 working with outside help, 74

F

feedback to designer, 55, 58
 focus groups
 and brand awareness, 77–78
 as market research, 6
 Folgers Coffee brand, 28
 font as part of brand, 5
 free resources, hazards of promising, 43

G

generational diversity in Core Team, 18
 great brand, 115. *See also* brands, charac-
 teristics of
 groups of users. *See* segmenting of market;
 target audience

H

Harley motorcycles, 82
 Harris County Public Library (Houston,
 Texas), 45, 108–110
 high school art students as designers, 51
 honesty of brand, 28–29, 115
 and blog maintenance, 89
 and brand audit, 36
 and brand message, 46–47

I

imperfect results, 71
 incentives for survey participation, 77
 increased use as marketing objective, 3
 information packet in recruiting Core
 Team, 21–22
 Internet
 as competition to library, 12–13
 and conversations with users, 87–88
 for education about marketing, 72–73
 as source for designer, 51
 See also blogs
 interviews as market research, 6
 Ipswich (Mass.) Public Library, 104–107

J

jargon, avoidance of, 91

L

libraries, other, copying, 34
 library board
 and blog, 91
 and brand audit, 33
 brand awareness of, 75
 in branding process, 16–17
 building relationships with users, 84–85
 and tagline, 45
 training for, 83
 library director, 18, 20
 library story, 1, 4, 38–49, 115. *See also*
 brand story
 logos
 in brand audit, 35, 36
 elements of in other libraries' logos, 51
 importance of, 4–5, 95–96
 in-house adaptations of, 54
 non-memorable, 46

logos (cont.)

- vs. tagline, 44
- uses of, 29
- variations of as deliverables, 53
- See also* brand look; visual identity of brand

Lucius Beebe Memorial Library
(Wakefield, Mass.)

- case study, 100–103
- design standards, 60–61
- editorial guidelines, 59–60
- logo and tagline, 5, 45, 54
- overview, ix
- staff involvement, 23

M

- market research, 6
- marketing, 1, 115
- marketing plan, 63–64, 115
- marketing process, 8–9
- marketing strategy, 2–6, 8, 115
- marketing tactics. *See* tactical marketing
- marketing tools in marketing plan, 64
- Maxwell House Coffee brand, 28
- meetings and brand audit, 32–33
- message of brand, 25–27, 38–49, 114
 - attribute or emotion, 43–44
 - in brand audit, 32–36
 - and community, 39–40
 - in creative brief, 54
 - delivering on, 83
 - evaluation of, 39
 - importance of, 94, 95
 - and mission of library, 40–43
 - and non-memorable logos/taglines, 46
 - strength, 77
 - tagline, 44–46, 48–49
- mission statement, 115
 - vs. brand, ix
 - and brand message, 40–42
 - developing brand message without a mission, 42–43
 - importance of, 96
- must-have features (absolutes), 54, 113

N

- new users as target audience, 3, 5
- Nike brand logo, 4, 27
- non-users and defining role of the library, 17

O

- objectives in creative brief, 53
- objectives in marketing strategy, 2–3, 8, 79, 115
- online work spaces, use of, 10
- opposition to branding process, 17

P

- parking as part of brand, 5
- participants in branding process, 16–24
 - identification of, 16–18
 - team creation, 18–20
 - team roles, 20–21
 - See also* Core Team
- “Pass It on Week” promotion, 47
- patrons. *See* users
- perfection, hazards of, 71
- planning, importance of, 96
- political considerations, 17, 21
- portfolios, evaluation of, 52, 115
- print-ready logo, 54
- printing of materials, 52, 57
- prior brand. *See* brands, prior
- pro bono work and consultants, 51, 67
- project leader, characteristics of, 19, 23, 94–95
- project plan, sample, xii–xiii
- promotion, 7, 115
 - of blog, 90–91
- proposals from consultants, 69
- public relations, 7, 115

Q

- quantifiable objectives, 3, 79. *See also* objectives in creative brief; objectives in marketing strategy; statistics on use
- quiet place, library as, 14, 44

R

- reading about marketing, 72
- references from consultants and designers, 52, 69–70, 72
- relationships, importance of, 73
 - exercise, 74
- repetition of brand, 28, 36
- role of library
 - and consumers’ consideration sets, 13–14
 - and selection of team members, 17
 - as story, 4

S

sales, 8, 115

Saturn cars, 82

secret shopper evaluations, 84

segmenting of market, 3, 116. *See also*
 demographic segmenting; target audience

signage as part of brand, 5

small libraries, 97

special interests, building relationships with, 85

special libraries, branding in, 12

staff involvement
 and brand audit, 33
 and brand awareness, 75
 brand standards, 96
 in branding process, 16, 62–63, 68
 on Checkpoint Team, 19
 Core Team, 24
 effect of lack of, 93–94
 and library blog, 90
 training program, 81–83

stakeholders. *See* Checkpoint Team; Support Team

standards. *See* design standards

Starbucks brand, 14, 44

statistics on use, 78, 84. *See also* quantifiable objectives

story. *See* brand story; library story

Support Team, 116
 and designer, 56
 overview, 20
 qualifications for participants/roles of participants, 21

survey instruments exercise, 79–80

surveys
 in brand audit, 34–35
 on brand awareness, 75–77, 78
 and building relationships with users, 84–85
 exercise, 79–80
 as market research, 6
 testing brand messages, 41–42, 43

T

tactical marketing, 2, 7–8, 116

taglines, 44–46, 116
 in brand standards, 59, 60

in evaluation of brand, 77

exercise in writing, 48–49

importance of, 95

non-memorable, 46

words to describe library, 111–112

Talbots brand, 26

target audience, 116
 identifying, 5–6
 in marketing plan, 1, 63
 meaningfulness of brand to, 26
 and story, 4
 and targeted taglines, 45–46
See also segmenting of market

teams, 18–20
 Checkpoint Team, 19
 Core Team (*see* Core Team)
 Support Team, 20

template, 116. *See also* brand templates

timetables
 for introduction of brand, 63
 to keep process moving, 70
 for logo development, 54
 for marketing plan, 63
 for surveys, 42
 in working with consultants, 67

training for marketing, 73

trustees. *See* library board

typeface as part of brand, 5

U

users
 as brand ambassadors, 82
 building relationships with, 84–85, 88–90
 and defining role of the library, 17
 new users, 3, 5
 participants in branding process, 16

uses of brand
 in creative brief, 53–54
 standards for, 59–60

V

vision statement, 96, 116

visual identity of brand, 4, 27–28, 50–58
 in brand audit, 32–33
 design standards, 60–61
See also brand look; logos

Volkswagen brand, 26

volunteers, 95
Volvo brand, 28

W

Wakefield Library. *See* Lucius Beebe
 Memorial Library (Wakefield, Mass.)
West Palm Beach (Fla.) Public Library
 tagline, 45
word-of-mouth publicity
 and finding a designer, 51–52
 See also buzz
words which describe the library (app. B),
 41, 111–112

From McDonald's arches to Nike's swoosh, logos are part of the everyday landscape. They are the visual representations of brands, defining the meaning and message of the company. Branding is one part of the marketing process that focuses on developing a laser-sharp message and the means to communicate that message to the intended audience. But in a library, where does branding fit?

In the new media mix, libraries need to stand up and effectively communicate their benefits as preferred providers of information and entertainment resources. By following the step-by-step guidance of Doucett, branding pro turned librarian, libraries can begin to develop branding that makes a difference and is tailored to the nonprofit public library arena.

Creating Your Library Brand covers everything from working with outside experts to evaluating and maintaining your library's brand, illustrated by case studies from actual libraries. For those who have already begun the branding process, the chapters stand on their own—librarians can jump in wherever they need to. End-of-chapter exercises enhance the feedback process. Tips, suggestions for success, and answers to frequently asked questions ensure your team collaborates on a library brand that will bring more patrons through the door!

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