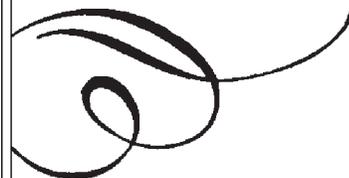# COMMUNICATING MISSION AND BUILDING LIBRARY BRAND USING TAGLINES, SLOGANS, OR LOGOS

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&
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We live in a visual society. Everywhere you go, you can see various eye-catching logos, trademarks, service marks, and other identifying marks for organizations. These extend to the Internet, perhaps the most eye-appealing resource ever, where librarians increasingly use its power and reach to communicate with their publics using Flash, animated GIFs, and both audio and video messages.

We librarians can capitalize on this visual trend to promote effectively our library's programs, services, and collections. We hear and read a lot about visibly marketing our libraries and services through branding and building brand. Other strategies include merchandizing collections, segmenting customers into user groups, and other similar concepts to demonstrate, instruct, and advertise what we do.

The purpose of this article is to focus on the concepts of *brand*, *building brand*, and using a *tag line* to communicate the library's mission to the public it serves. When effectively crafted, these concepts are foundational in helping the librarian to position the academic, public, or special library in the hearts and minds of its customers.

Throughout this article, the word *customer* refers to a library's clients, patrons, users, and/or visitors. The article uses the pronoun *he* and its objective case form *him*, both of which are intended to be gender neutral.

FIRST AND CONTINUING IMPRESSIONS SHAPE THE LIBRARY'S BRAND

We are all customers and have a range of experiences developed over time from using products and dealing with all types of organizations. This includes businesses, government, and libraries. When we deal with any organization, either profit or not-for-profit, we have expectations that change over time (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 31). A library's *brand* is the sum of its customers' perceptions about the library and their interpretations of their impressions. Brand is intangible and important to a librarian because it is the customers' perceived value of the library. From the customers' point of view, brand is the quality that people expect, a snapshot of the library's promise and its relationship with the customer.

Of course, library administrators have perceptions of their library's brand, too, and they want their customers' perceptions to match theirs as closely as possible. For this reason, administrators use publicity and other marketing strategies that are part of brand management to help shape the customers' image of the library's perceived value. Publicity and advertising describe the library's benefits, characteristics, how it interacts with other organizations, and even the library's "personality." These efforts are focused to build brand strength, brand recognition, and achieve greater brand penetration to serve members of its community.

> **"From the customers' points of view, brand is the quality that people expect, a snapshot of the library's promise and its relationship with the customer."**

BUILDING THE LIBRARY'S BRAND BY USING TAGLINES, SLOGANS, OR LOGOS

One of the most successful and low-cost ways to convey the library's brand is to create a unified, consistent message through a slogan or tagline. "By using carefully chosen words and crafting succinct phrases, a tagline is able to convey the personality of a brand and its unique position in the marketplace" (Olsen, 2005, newsletter). To accomplish this, librarians can carefully review the library's Web site content and design, promotional and advertising flyers, signage, and other materials that present the library's face to the public. This is important because customers make judgments about the library from viewing these documents, even ascribing personality attributes to a given typeface (Brumberger, 2003, p. 213). For this reason, part of providing a consistent identity may also include using the same fonts, colors, and graphics as part of the library's identifying marks (Schultz & Barnes, 1999, p. 43).

Ball State University Libraries
A destination for research, learning, and friends

Figure 1 - Ball State University Libraries' name followed by their tagline.

Librarians can use taglines, slogans, or logos as visual opportunities to help develop and reinforce a stronger brand association in the customers' minds. The library's *tagline* is the phrase or sentence that follows the library's name, or logo, or that appears at the end of a promotional message. It has to be something that the librarians and paraprofessional personnel can turn into a reality to deliver its implied promise.

For example, the Ball State University Libraries' tagline is *A destination for research, learning, and friends*, as shown in Figure 1. These seven words summarize and convey the personality of our brand and its promise, which will be discussed below. Among other activities, we have used our tagline and have built on the theme of *destination* to position our libraries favorably in the campus community. Its three-part promise conveys the idea of the libraries providing students and faculty with a research, learning, and social dimension.

A *slogan*, derived from a Scottish word meaning "battle cry," expresses the library's aims or nature (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2007). For example, the Ball State University Libraries' slogan is *Your best bet for information solutions!* These six words convey what the University Libraries are about and likely are unambiguous when heard by our customers, and they serve to create some interest in us. Our secondary slogan is powerful, yet it is less a rallying call because its meaning and understanding by our customers is sometimes not immediately clear, *The University Libraries … second only to the classroom for learning and discovery.*

A library's logo is a symbol, graphic element, or trademark designed for easy and definite recognition of the brand. A library's logo influences its brand since people think of the organization or product when they see the logo or graphic. Because the Ball State University Libraries are part of the university, the Libraries do not use a separate graphic; however, we use Ball State's *Beneficence*, as can be seen at the top right of our newsletter's masthead, *The Library Insider*, www.bsu.edu/library/virtualpress/libinsider. Some academic libraries have their own graphic identity as their visual and unique identifying mark.

Taglines, slogans, and logos are low-cost and are generally easy to implement. These devices help librarians create a meaningful visual distinction that allows their library to stand out from other similar organizations, that is, to *differentiate* their library from other information marketplace competitors such as mega bookstores, "… the Internet, large wholesale clearinghouses, even supermarkets and convenience stores where information can be retrieved quickly and at insignificant or no cost" (Vazquez, 2006, p. 55). The objective in creating a strong library brand is for customers to perceive quality that exceed their needs.

Furthermore, based on the customers' positive library experiences, they will advocate for it through word-of-mouth to their friends, colleagues, and associates (Samson, 2006, p. 649). This *brand loyalty*, in tandem with a favorable view of the library, keeps your library's clientele coming back to enjoy its programs, services, and collections.

DELIVERING ON THE BRAND'S PROMISE

The Ball State University Libraries' tagline conveys a three-part promise: that the libraries are a destination for research, learning, and friends. To deliver on the promise implicit in the tagline, the Libraries' administration has to do its part, too. This begins with personnel and includes the libraries' facilities. The libraries' professional and paraprofessional personnel are championed to provide a customer-friendly, inviting facility. Our research promise incorporates the librarians and other personnel who are available to help students and faculty with their research projects and assignments. Our learning promise includes our quality print and digital collections for discovery and learning and a large number and variety of individual and collaborative spaces for research and study. These spaces are where customers can interact with each other with excellent, educative technology. Lastly, our promise of friends includes social spaces such as the café in Bracken Library that provides students and faculty with a place to meet and talk, that offers a reasonably priced menu for food and beverages, and that contributes to students remaining longer in the library because of the café's convenience.

Yet communicating a consistent message is only part of the story. Additionally, the library's brand has to demonstrate to its customers that it delivers *value*, that is, the library's perceived quality must exceed the customers' expectations (Aaker, 1996, p. 83).

Library publicity and advertising typically convey the library's brand image and promise. For a public

library, for example, the promise might be that the library is a technology center for the community, or a resource for small businesses, or a literacy or ESL or other type of training center (Sneary, 2007). Further, it can be a place to find bestsellers and other recreational reading for life-long learning and personal development. Depending on the library's resources for programming, it may be all of these.

Based on the customer's experience, his first and subsequent visits are pivotal for him to determine if the brand delivers on its promise. After each experience, the customer readjusts his opinion about the library. In this way, a library's brand is intangible, psychological, ever changing, and builds slightly over time.

The principal drivers of a library's operational strategy for it to achieve its goals and objectives are its mission, vision, and values. Together, these philosophical underpinnings create the context for the library's brand and give the library its personality. For example, the library's *mission* captures its role as an organization that creates and adds value through providing meaningful experiences for its customers through its programs, services, and collections. Its *vision* is its aspirations about the type of organization it wants to be, such as an innovative college library aligned with the goals of its parent institution, or a library at the forefront of providing integrated information literacy programs, or being the place of choice in its customers' search for knowledge. Lastly, its *values* are the beliefs that guide it, such as commitment to accessibility, democracy, inclusiveness, intellectual freedom, and privacy of information, among others.

THE IMPACT OF THE LIBRARY'S BRAND ON ITS ADMINISTRATION AND PERSONNEL

There is another side to library branding, a facet that may be the most important. It concerns the selection, training, and ongoing orientation of the personnel whose direct or indirect contact with the public translates the library's brand since it is the commitment by employees who will shape and deliver the brand through their services and energy (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 26). To add value to the brand, the entire library's operation needs to be aligned and integrated for communication (Schultz & Barnes, 1999, p. 63) and service. Quality, excellent service or positive attitudes between employees and visitors, and a consistent image are common attributes associated with libraries (Wolpert, 1999).

In addition, library personnel need the right technology training and equipment to delight the library's customers. New and continuing employees need to hear regularly about the important role of the library and how it serves its community. In this way, the library's brand exerts an influence on the library's administrators and personnel — branding from the inside out.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Building the library's brand takes time, discipline, and commitment; yet, building brand and developing it is worthwhile in that this intangible measure is a snapshot of how customers perceive the library and their collective interpretation of the library's ability to deliver on its promises. Librarians can manage the library's brand through publicity, advertising, and by using taglines, slogans, or logos to help create a favorable association in the minds of its publics. Additional steps to strengthen the library's brand are employee orientation and training, proper equipment, and inviting facilities that allow personnel to deliver the library's promises. These types of efforts are cost-effective in terms of creating brand loyalty so that customers look to the library to meet their needs and come back repeatedly to take advantage of the library's programs, services, and collections – allowing the library to accomplish its mission.

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