

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF MARKETING ACTIVITY ON THE PERFORMANCE OF CENTRAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN BUCHAREST

Senior Lecturer PhD Ruxandra Irina POPESCU
Lecturer PhD Răzvan-Andrei CORBOȘ
Academy of Economic Studies Bucharest

Abstract:

After a prolonged and complex process of reconstruction, extension and modernization, Central University Library "Carol I" in Bucharest has re-opened to public access in November 2001, bringing a new concept on what library services should mean. Under these auspicious circumstances, the library's offer has widened, the quality of services offered has improved, gradually displaying an interest in developing a closer relationship with its customers. The necessity of being more oriented to the marketing tools and techniques has become more apparent. Therefore, the top managers of the Central University Library have included in their three general development strategies produced so far, specific objectives, such as: an increase of the volume of paid serviced provided, promoting the services and work elaborated by its specialists through leaflets, presentations, albums, folders with press extracts. Beyond these actions with positive effects, the efforts of Central University Library for strengthening its position on the market of the providers of information services are diminished by the various malfunctions that characterize the marketing activity of this institution. Therefore, this work intends to contribute to the improvement of the marketing activity of the library by coming up with some solutions that could remove or at least diminish these weak points.

Key words: The marketing of libraries, performance, the marketing mix of libraries (product, distribution, price and promotion)

Introduction

In Romania as well as in other countries, implementing marketing practices and techniques in libraries can encounter many obstacles. Many of these obstacles are in fact older problems of these institutions: lack of sufficient funds and qualified work force (especially in marketing and management) librarians' mentality, the behavior and prejudices of the qualified personnel at information desks, their confusing actions, institutional isolation and traditional inertia. In addition to all these, there are the administrative barriers and lack of involvement of the authorities in encouraging, supporting

and rewarding the performances of the cultural and info-documentary structures (Enache, 2006).

However, Romanian library system has undergone some positive changes lately. For instance, as far as the legislative aspect is concerned, the new law for libraries (Law no. 334/2002) has succeeded to organize their activity efficiently, and Government Emergency Ordinance no. 84/1998¹ has solved, even if partially, the issue regarding the insufficiency of funds by the introduction

¹ Approved with modifications by Law no. 205/2001, published in the Official Monitor no. 212/2001.

of a source of funding alternative to the one received from the budget from the state: possibility to use the income obtained from individual activities.

Central University Library "Carol I" is one of the few institutions in the field, in Romania who succeeded to take advantage of this niche provided by the new legislative frame. The absorption of the self-obtained funds enabled it to speed up the transition process into becoming a modern library with diverse services, which provide fast and flexible access to information resources. In this context, the necessity to develop closer relationships with the library's users and their ever changing needs lead to an increase of the interest for marketing. Therefore, new activities emerged: annual organization of some cultural events, printing of promotional materials and creation of a logo.

Libraries marketing: theoretical aspects

Marketing is not new to libraries, it is as old as the librarian profession. The origins of marketing can be found in the 1870's, but the development of formalized marketing in libraries is linked to the following assumptions (Popescu, 2008, p. 1):

- libraries have a long history, they are non-profit organizations and the development of marketing for libraries has been influenced by Philip Kotler's theories, that promoted the concept of marketing for non-profit organizations;
- libraries are involved in services operations in the public area; the services are distinct from the products and are characterized by the following attributes: intangibility, etherogeneity, inseparability and perish character;
- libraries must establish relations with the users, suppliers, governments, mother organizations etc.; libraries must be concerned not only with the needs of users and potential users, but also with

convincing and satisfying third-parties – for effort and resources – that will represent a benefit for the community of users;

- one of the librarians' goals is to inform. Information is not consumed, is nontransferable, invisible and accumulative;
- The Internet has largely influenced the concept of library and information service. This helps libraries to offer services anywhere, anytime and to anyone.

Still, there are a lot of understandings in the libraries sector regarding the meaning of marketing for libraries. Thus:

Marketing represents an integrated way of offering library services which include adjustment to the environment's influences, the analysis of needs and goals of the present and potential users, the imaginative modeling of services, target communication, facilities conveniently and attractively placed and the value of services which surpasses the user's cost for obtaining them (Enache & Maftai, 2003).

"Marketing refers to products and services that you try to sell or to convince people to use – evaluating consumers' needs and creating products for them" (Kotler, 1984, p. 187). "Libraries provide a service and have consumers – any action for promoting library services and attracting readers from the community can be described as marketing" (Elliot de Sáez, 1997, p.1).

The marketing of libraries finds deep roots in social marketing, but newer theories directly affect the nature of present library marketing (Munteanu, 2006). These later concepts have widened in a continuous manner the action range of library marketing. Figure 1 describes a very concise development of library marketing:

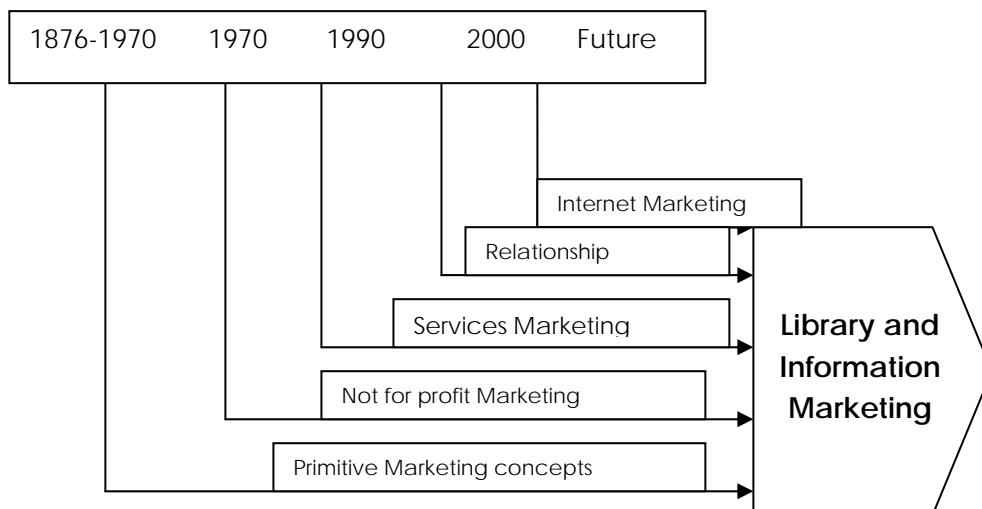


Figure 1. Library marketing and information services evolution
 (Source: Gupta, Koontz et al, 2006, p. 8)

- **Before 1970:** in the beginning, promoting and public relations for the library services represented an important issue for this field, largely debated in the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's. But the idea of using the concept of marketing for libraries and information services started with Kotler and Levy's classic article (1969), that represented the pioneering for the idea of marketing for non-profit organizations.

- **1970-1980:** in the first years of marketing introduction it was considered that it is applicable for libraries and marketing techniques that were useful for toothpaste by example, will be used for non-profit institutions. It must be said that public libraries were the first that adopted the marketing concept.

- **1980-1990:** during this decade the biggest trust was awarded to marketing planning in the „4P” framework, to promoting technologies that reflected the importance of using them in libraries.

- **1990-2000:** the focus moved on the traditional marketing strategies (for example recruiting new consumers), but also arised the need for increasing

employees' competence in satisfying clients, as well as the quality of client services.

- **At present,** the attention of library marketing and information services is directed towards relations' marketing, internal marketing, branding, the loyalty for the consumer, Internet marketing, networks marketing etc (Gupta, Koontz et al, 2006, p. 9).

Concluding, one might say that starting from the field of consumer goods where it initially appeared, the marketing ideas were extended in time also to the non-profit services and organizations. Thus, the concept of *social marketing* took form (Costache, 2002), focusing on identifying the user's needs and on the quality of services provided. As a special variant of the non-profit marketing and implicitly of the cultural marketing, the library marketing took form. Starting from the idea of widening the marketing application sphere to the information-documentary structures, Jean-Michel Salaun (1992, p. 133) stated that: „Rare are the professions in which the activity practice has changed so much, as the librarian profession, where the notions of network, cooperation, media and free

access can be directly transposed into marketing terms”.

The Library...

Central University Library "Carol I" in Bucharest (CUL-B "Carol I") is a library of national importance, being subordinated to and financed by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth.

CUL-B "Carol I"² is a complex info-documentary structure, member of the National Libraries System. According to the Functioning Regulations of CUL-B "Carol I" (www.bcub.ro), its main tasks are the acquisition of documents on any type of support and of various other electronic informative-documentary products, their processing (recording, listing, indexing) and their organized stocking, traditional and electronic dissemination of documents and information through a wide range of services, teaching the users as well as performing some activities of research and development in the field of library and information science.

This institution is currently facing the third strategic development plan set for 2008-2011. Within this plan, are set the directions in defining the library's mission. Therefore, CUL-B "Carol I":

- is a complex info-documentary structure for students, teachers and researchers;
- is a modern library, based on the usage of new technologies;
- contributes to an increase of the quality of university's educational process by developing an appropriate environment for reading, through the collections it owns, and through the infrastructure and the information system it holds, through the diverse services it offers;

- co-operates, for accomplishing its objectives, with libraries, educational and research, professional associations and other organizations in the field.

The marketing activity of Central University Library "Carol I" in Bucharest

The lack of a specialized marketing compartment in the organizational structure of CUL-B "Carol I" limits the efforts made to constantly meet its users' needs. This shortcoming is amplified by the lack of a proper marketing strategy that should come in the support of the general development strategy of the library and that would enable putting into practice an efficient marketing in this institution. Under the circumstances, there are inconveniences that affect the efficiency of the services provided by CUL-B "Carol I" (such as users' accessing less than 65% of the total existing books stocked), these being problems generated by the absence of a strategic planning of the marketing activity.

Consequently, despite all the efforts made, the place taken by marketing within CUL-B "Carol I" is still ambiguous and at the "very beginning", meaning that the marketing activity takes place within the traditional departments of the library through an increase of their commercial role.

Therefore, an important role in the marketing activity of the library is held by the *Research and Methodology Department*, whose main task is to promote the image of the library in Bucharest's scientific circle, elaborate methodologies, instructions, working techniques to advertise the library in the university environment, publishing bibliographical research works and taking part in local, national and international projects.

According to the Functioning Regulations of CUL-B "Carol I", the activities performed by the Research and Methodology Department are:

² CUL-B "Carol I" is made up of 13 specialized compartments that can be found in the Central Location and 15 library subsidiaries in 17 other locations.

- publishing leaflets to advertise the activity of the library;
- sustain the cultural tradition of the library through retrospective bibliographical research;
- publishing "A guide of works of reference";
- bringing its contribution to "Romania database"(bibliographical database);
- contributing to "International linguistic bibliography" (annual).

Collections' Communication Department also has a significant contribution in promoting CUL-B "Carol I", by advertising in media the collections held in the patrimony of the library. This department is responsible for providing an optimum guidance and information service with regards to the collections of the library, through multiple ways of public intercommunication; advertising within the reading rooms all the types of documents the library's collections contain; providing access of the readers to the library, by issuing and validating access permits.

An important role in the development of the relationship with the library's users is also played by the *Reference' Office*. According to the Functioning Regulations of CUL-B "Carol I", it performs the following tasks:

- edit and design the materials that advertise, present and provide contact details of the
 - institution;
 - provide information about CUL-B "Carol I"'s status, history and mission to internal and external customers;
 - update the web site information of the library;
 - edit informational materials about the library's collections;
 - organize guide tours of the library in Romanian, English and French;
 - accomplish, on request, bibliographical investigations;
 - guide the users in the process of information research.

Other departments that take part in the informal organization of the marketing activity of CUL-B "Carol I" are the *Office for the Development of Collections and Periodicals' Office*. They are constantly getting informed with regards to the library's main categories of users and their needs, so that the library' offer is sized appropriately. Therefore, the library distributes customer surveys to its users so that they can suggest names of publications that the library doesn't hold and that they consider important.

Given all the information above, we can draw the conclusion that there is marketing activity taking place within CUL-B "Carol I", but it is spread over the traditional departments of the library and its most of the times triggered by its immediate needs. A marketing strategy that co-ordinates the specific processes of this field would significantly improve the results the library could get in the relationship with its customers.

There are, however, premises for the improvement of these malfunctions. The general development strategy of CUL-B "Carol I", planned for 2008-2011 includes a special section that sets clear objectives to promote library's collections, services and image. These are:

- advertise in media the services provided by the library in order to attract a higher number of readers;
- advertise in media the events organized by the library, for a real integration of the library in Bucharest's cultural-scientific circle;
- start re-organizing "Foundation's Conferences" cycle to follow the tradition from the interwar period (starting with 2008);
- annual organization of „The Days of the Library”;
- library's participation to the most important Book Fairs in Bucharest and in the country.

The Marketing Mix

As there isn't a specific department that elaborates an appropriate strategy to accomplish the library's marketing function, there is felt the lack of clear product, price, placing and promotion policy. The "4P" of the marketing mix (as they are called in the literature in this field) are present to some degree in the activities performed by CUL-B "Carol I" through its traditional departments.

Product policy

CUL-B "Carol I"'s collections are developed through purchase, internal and external exchange, donations, transfer and include a wide range of Romanian and foreign documents:

- **books** (the total number of books held on 31 December 2008, reached an impressive number of 1.912.718 items)³;
- **serial publications** (120.884 titles, 452.191 books and 2.393.424 sheets);
- **cartographic and archiving publications;**
- **audiovisual documents;**
- **graphic documents;**
- **electronic documents;**
- **photographic documents.**



A special place in the book stock is held by the **bibliophile values**

collection. This old book collection, very precious for the national and international cultural heritage, was partially renewed after the Revolution in 1989 when 12,000 bibliophile documents were burnt. The

bibliophile values collection currently includes (Constantin, 2005): Romanian authors books (393 titles), *Foreign authors* (290 titles), *manuscripts* (580 titles), *correspondence* (593 titles), *ex-libris* (397 titles).

Price policy

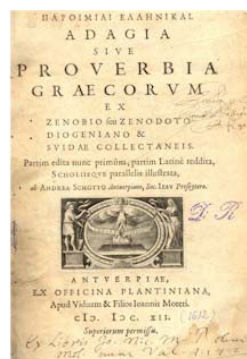
Given that most info-documentary structures in Romania clearly show reluctance in charging for the services they provide, CUL-B "Carol I" is amongst the few public libraries in Romania who chose to have a detailed price policy.

This new orientation appeared at the same time with the elaboration of "The Strategy of Development of CUL-B "Carol I" 2000-2003", *Chapter 3.3, Financial Resources*, that set as main objective *the increase of the amount of paid services provided*.

The fees charged for using the services provided by CUL-B "Carol I" are set by the library's executives, according to Law no. 205/2001 and are approved by the Council of Administration at the beginning of each academic year. They are visibly posted within the library's public areas.

The price policy of the library is based on the idea of charging for accessing this kind of information.

Under the circumstances, the library issues, in exchange of a fee, permits for allowing access to the reading room. The fees for these permits are set in accordance with the category of users. For instance, the price of a permit for a student attending one faculty at Bucharest University is RON 15, while for a student attend two faculties within the same university and



³ Although the existing book stock is very diverse and comprehensive, it is not entirely used, out of the total 1.912.718 books held, only 1.221.660 being accessed by the readers (that is less than 65%).

who wishes to borrow books from the specialized libraries of the two faculties, the price of the permit is RON 20.

Categories of users, such as retired university professors and deserving students (on scholarship, with Olympic results, and those taking part in Erasmus programs, etc) have free access, while high school students in their last year and other socio-professional categories that do not belong to academia can get library permits for limited periods of time (6 days – RON 3, 30 days –RON 5 etc).

Other services provided by CUL-B "Carol I" for the improvement of the facilities of providing access to information are being charged for as well. The users have to pay if they want to save the information either on any type of electronic support (CD –ROM, memory stick) or if they want to photocopy different materials. Renting individual rooms, conference rooms and access to multimedia facility are also paid services.

For access to Internet in computers' areas, the users are offered free access for one hour a day, being charged with RON 1.5/h for anything exceeding this timescale.

As far as CUL-B "Carol I"'s publications are concerned, acquiring any of the materials is possible for a fee that is set by the executives of the library, and that depends on the work effort of their authors and the resources used to have them published. The institution makes public on its website a list of 19 types of paper works that can be bought (for instance, guides, bibliographic indexes, PhD thesis, bibliographical research papers, etc).

Distribution policy

CUL-B "Carol I" provides its services through the Central location that is made up of three building blocks and 15 subsidiaries. Being located in the centre of Bucharest is a good argument to encourage the various

categories of customers to use it more frequently, especially the students of Bucharest University.

After the reopening of the library in 2001, its distribution policy has adopted an efficient guiding system of the users within its premises to increase their access to the institution's resources. The new building of the library is marked with appropriate direction finders. In addition, electronic information desks touch screen models are available and provide information about: the plan of each floor, services provided information points available, methods of information recapture the thematic of each reading room, the number and position of seats within the rooms, etc.

Promotion policy

Promotion of the image of CUL-B "Carol I" is accomplished by The Research- Methodology Department and References Department, which are responsible for editing and designing the promotional materials, as well as for the ongoing update of the information on the web site.



An important means of promotion of the image is accomplished by organizing and taking part in diverse *cultural events*, as well as books releases, symposiums, book fairs, visits from officials, etc. By annual organization of "The Days of the library" and holding the regular "Conferences of the Foundation", the institution aims at increasing the

adhesion of its customers to the library's values and attracting new users.

Another method used for the promotion of the image of CUL-B "Carol I" is that of publishing *promotional materials*. Spreading *leaflets and booklets* to the customers has acquired an increased importance within the library, following the elaboration of the development strategy for 2004-2007 that sets the following main objective: promoting the serviced of CUL-B "Carol I" and the works written by its specialists through leaflets, presentations, albums, newspapers' extracts folders, etc.

The promotional materials currently used are: post cards, folders, booklets, pocket calendars and bookmarks. They contain useful information about: the services provided, the structure of the library, own publications, databases the library has subscription to, terms of access to the library, etc and are customized with the photo of the main building of the library.

The Web page of a library is a marketing tool in itself, useful in shaping its image. The managers of CUL-B "Carol I" were aware of this and, therefore, the web site distinguishes itself as being user friendly, given that

the degree of complexity of the information provided is very high (about 300 browsing pages). The main page of the website contains a link to a video presentation of CUL-B "Carol I" that is a sort of virtual tour of the institution.

The web page provides good communication between CUL-B "Carol I" and its users. It also has a special section called "guests' book" where everyone accessing the library's website can post their own views about the library, but also come up with suggestions for the improvement of their services. The library's website also includes a "Frequently Asked Questions" section whose role is to quickly guide the users and that also provides the opportunity of filling in an online form with titles of books the users would like to find in the library's offer.

Another important step that CUL-B "Carol I" has taken on its way to an effective marketing was that of creating a logo (figure 2). This is frequently used, both on the official web page of the library and on different promotional materials that it provides, however, the message conveyed is not a very convincing one because of the "out-of-date" design and the lack of an appropriate motto.



Figure 2. CUL - B "Carol I" logo

Source: <http://www.bcub.ro/>

Recommendations and proposals for the improvement of the marketing activity within CUL-B "Carol I"

A. The improvement of the activity of the organizational system

This institution does not have a specialized compartment that coordinates the marketing activities; therefore, one of the main

consequences is the lack of a proper strategy that leads to a strengthening of the library's position on the market. Therefore, the marketing activity is spread within the traditional departments of the institution and is mostly oriented towards satisfying library's immediate needs, rather than to creating a long-term advantage. In an attempt to eliminate these shortcomings, the existing services within the organizational structure of CUL-B "Carol I" are also contributing to the promotion of its image by publishing leaflets, informing on its collections,

organization of cultural events, etc, but they are not able to provide coherence to the operations accomplished by the staff of the library.

Under the circumstances, there is a need for **creating a specialized marketing department** (figure 3) that integrates all the marketing-related activities of CUL-B "Carol I". This would become an efficient solution to the current problems the library, as the malfunctions caused by the sharing of marketing tasks within several departments would be eliminated.

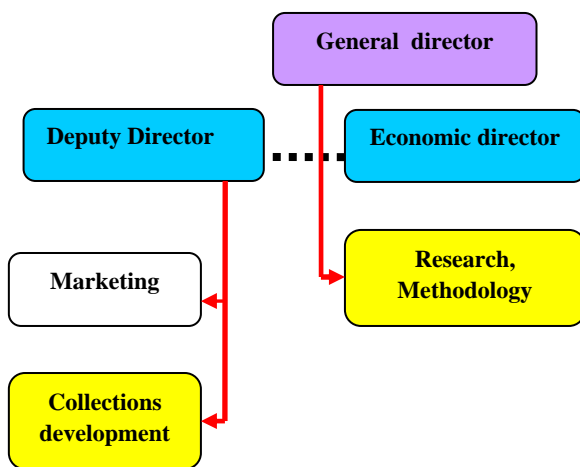


Figure 3. The New Marketing Department, part of CUL – B “Carol organogram

As far as the position that this department will fill in within the organizational structure of the library, it is recommended that the Marketing Department is subordinated to The Deputy Director who also co-ordinates the activity of the Collections' Development Department. For a library it is very important to develop the book fund in accordance with the real needs of its users, therefore, the support of a specialized marketing department becomes essential.

Once technical issues solved, the new Marketing Department will be assigned with the fundamental mission

of transforming CUL-B "Carol I" in a point of reference for the development of the intellectual abilities of the students in the capital city, by reviving the image of the library and by strongly focusing on the customers' needs. In order to accomplish this mission, the marketing compartment has to be allocated an annual budget by the top management of the library, as well as specialized and creative staff and a marketing strategy that is part of the general development strategy of CUL-B "Carol I". The construction of the future marketing strategy will have to meet the following needs:

- the development and implementation of a brand identity that would strengthen the library's message towards the targeted customer groups' (students; university teachers, etc);

- the development and implementation of strategies that would turn CUL-B "Carol I" into a central destination of cultural events;

- initiate intensive communication projects with the library's users by coming up with strategies that would stimulate feedback and the efficient information dissemination with the public;

- the development, based on the feedback received from the library's users, of new types of services that would meet their real needs;

- the development of public relations with local political leaders to reinforce the role of CUL-B "Carol I" within the community;

- ongoing look for partnerships whose scopes would overlap with the mission and objectives of the library to confer it added value;

- ongoing assessment of the marketing strategies for reviewing the accomplishment of targets.

- Also, when elaborating the marketing strategy it will be considered that the objectives set should be measurable, so that they can contribute to an impartial assessment of the Marketing Department's efficiency:

- increase of the number of registrations from 27.000 users (the number of users registered on 31st Dec 2008), to 54.000 users by the end of 2010;

- increase of readers' attendance of CUL-B "Carol I" by 30% by the end of 2010 (from an attendance of 383.000 readers at the end of 2008 to a frequency of almost 500.000 readers in 2010).

B. Decrease the number of steps one needs to take in the process of user's accessing information, as well as reducing the number of employees the user gets in direct contact with

Another issue that has to do with the way the informing – documentary activity is organized within CUL-B "Carol I", is the complexity of the procedure for accessing informational resources held by the library. In order to reach the reading rooms, the user has to first submit the library permit at the "Information Check Point Desk". Here, the respective staff check the permit's validity against the library's database, and if everything is ok, the user receives a universal electronic card with a serial number from 1 to 385. He afterwards has to validate the card when entering the "Internet Area" from the library's ground floor and to book a seat in the reading room after contacting an employee from "References' Desk". It is well-known that being redirected from one library employee to another may often be frustrating for the person using the services of such an institution. Therefore, minimising the "bureaucracy" perceived by the user has to become a priority for CUL-B "Carol I".

If this problem remains unsolved, fulfilling the objectives already set in the library's marketing strategy becomes almost impossible. It is hard to believe that CUL-B "Carol I" will succeed to double the number of registered readers and to increase readers' attendance by 30% if the users are unhappy with the terms of access to the library's informational resources. Therefore, to remove any user's dissatisfaction about the degree of access to information, we propose ***that marketing department launches of a personalized library card that would encourage new customers to register*** (figure 4).

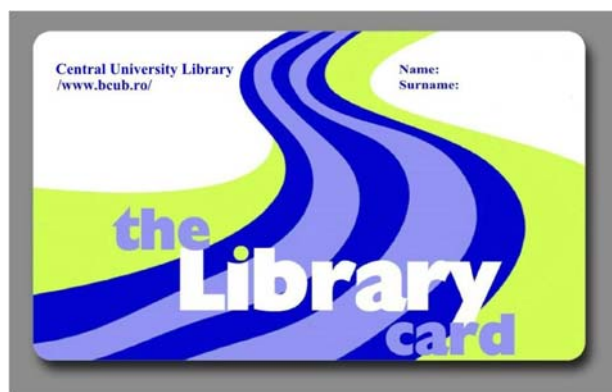


Figure 4. The new CUL-B "Carol I" access card

The functions of the new library card would reduce the number of steps the user has to take to gain access to the reading rooms. Therefore, the unnecessary interaction with the library staff at the "Information. Check Point Desk", will no longer be required, as the new, personalized card would enable automatic identification of the user and allow direct access, after validation. Also, booking a seat in the reading room will no longer be done by "References' Desk" as the card validation machine will automatically assign the seats in the reading room, according to the user's preferences and the degree of availability.

However, in order for the number of registrations and the flow in the library increases at the level of the expectations set out in the marketing strategy, it is not enough that the new card is functional. It has to come together with a strong advertising campaign to raise awareness of the readers and at the same time to benefit from a design that would change it into a real brand for the library.

Therefore, the card will have a design that will clearly suggest easy access to information within CUL-B "Carol I".

As far as the promotional campaign is concerned, throughout its development it will be accompanied by

the motto „The CUL-B "Carol I" card is YOU library card". The purpose of this motto is to make users to perceive CUL-B "Carol I" as being the main place where one can develop its intellectual abilities in Bucharest.

C. Organize actions of intensive communication with the library's users by stimulating feedback and the efficient dissemination of information with them

This action is generated by the fact that one of the main weak points that characterize the marketing activity of CUL-B "Carol I", is the underuse of the overall book fund. A simple analysis of the statistical data suggests that less than 65% of the books owned by the library are being consulted by the readers. The main reason for this failure is the poor communication between the library's users and the departments responsible with the development and communication of collection. Occasional distribution of forms that are to be filled in by the various categories of customers, with titles of books they would like to find in the library's offer is not sufficient. Market research is an activity that CUL-B "Carol I", should constantly be concerned about.

Therefore, for a strengthening of the relationship with the readers, we suggested that one of the objectives of

the new marketing compartment regarded the **organization actions of intensive communication with the library's users by stimulating feedback and the efficient dissemination of information with them.** The key of success in accomplishing this objective is that the customer perceived it as the central point of all the actions undertaken by the library's employees. This entails that, in its orientation towards the customer, CUL-B "Carol I" will have to display a major interest for a continuous market research and to provide a good management of the relationships with its customers. Under the circumstances, it becomes obvious the need for a diversification of the mechanisms that the library uses for data collection about its customers through *regular use of survey forms, organize online polls, insert a "complaints" section on the website page of the library and permanent consultation of the staff that is directly interacting with the users.*

The underuse of the overall book fund cannot though be improved, but after a prior consultation of the library's users. For that, we recommend **introducing a questionnaire** that reflects the way the user's need for access to information would be satisfied⁴. The questionnaire is made up of five questions that mainly refer to the degree of difficulty encountered by the users in the process of information research, as well as the degree to which the information found in the library's database correspond to the kind of information they needed. The reply to each question will consist of awarding it with points from 1 to 5 (such as "poor", "average", "good", "very good", "excellent"), and eventually the result would consist of the Arithmetic Average of the points scored for each question. For an increase of the degree of involvement of students in filling in the

forms, the questionnaires will have at the bottom of the page a logo that would stimulate feedback and will be placed inside books, for student to see every time they would access a book for reading.

A survey taking place as an example on a test sample of 200 people (users of CUL-B "Carol I") has registered the following results:

AA question 1 = 4, 05;

AA question 2 = 3, 40;

AA question 3 = 3, 45;

AA question 4 = 4, 15;

AA question 5 = 3, 25

(Where AA is the Arithmetic Average)

The conclusions of this statistical study can be summarized as follows:

- The high scores registered at questions 1 and 4 underline the fact that the technical means provided by CUL-B "Carol I" for information research within its databases are appreciated by the customers taking part in the survey as being very good;

- Low scores registered at questions 2, 3 and 5 indicated that although the questioned users are satisfied with the means available for data research within the library's databases, the information found was not always able to meet the need of the specific information searched. Therefore, it is necessary for CUL-B "Carol I" to find some methods that would enable the users to actively take part in the process of development of the collections for a better sizing of the library.

D. Initiating a campaign for accomplishing a strong brand for CUL-B "Carol I"

The lack of a strong brand and the poor put in use of the wide range of promotion instruments and techniques that modern marketing provides, is one of the main causes that slow down the

⁴ See Appendix 1.

process of improvement of the image of CUL-B "Carol I" at local level.

Rob Frankel, the most quoted expert in branding, states that „branding does not mean that the potential customer chooses you over choosing the competition; it's about making them perceive you as the only solution to their problem". Current marketing requires that branding is taken seriously by libraries as it provides them with personality and a distinctive character. The brand of a library can be represented by a name, a symbol, a logo, a motto or any other element able to amplify the message of the library and to sum up an image of the services that it provides. However, an important aspect that libraries should take into account is the fact that brand has to reflect reality, (not as in an optimistic scenario) and that after all, the quality of services provided is the one that sets the value.

CUL-B "Carol I" is amongst the few institutions in the field in the country that recourses to branding techniques for strengthening its position on the market of providing access to information. The first branding elements became evident at the same time with the reopening of the library in November 2001, when the new building brought a modern, friendly design meant to attract the users of the library. Using the same colours and markings for the areas with a similar functionality, and the endowment with Information Desks equipped with "Touch Screen" monitors are some of

the elements that have been used to convey identity to the new building.

Branding doesn't mean only uniformity in colour, design and aspect, but also „ sharing of thoughts". In this context, CUL-B "Carol I" has created a logo that is easy to recognize and that is supported by the quality of the services provided. The result of applying this logo indicate that it has been more like a failure rather than a success as very few people recognize the library's logo nowadays.

In order to come to the support of the previous attempts of improvement of the image of CUL-B "Carol I", we come with the proposal of **starting a rebranding campaign** that looks into the following elements used for its promotion.

- *the logo*: A logo is „a summary" of the personality and of the quality of the services that a library is providing. The current logo of the library (that represents an open book above which it's written the name of the library) tends to acquire an "out-of-date" aspect, both from a graphical point of view and from the point of view of its representativeness for what the library is for the time being. Therefore, to come up with a suggestion for the hybrid future of CUL-B "Carol I" (that combines the printed documents with those on electronic support), proposing *to create a new logo* that is the URL of the library „/bcub/", surrounded by a motive represented by a book shelf (figure 5).

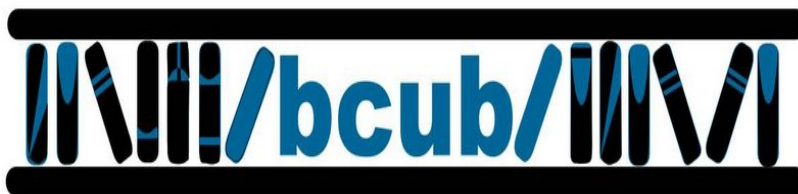


Figure 5. The new CUL-B "Carol I" logo

The new logo will be adopted on the web-site of the library (figure 6) that

will have a changed entry/home page and will appear on all of the library's

promotional materials (booklets, leaflets etc.).

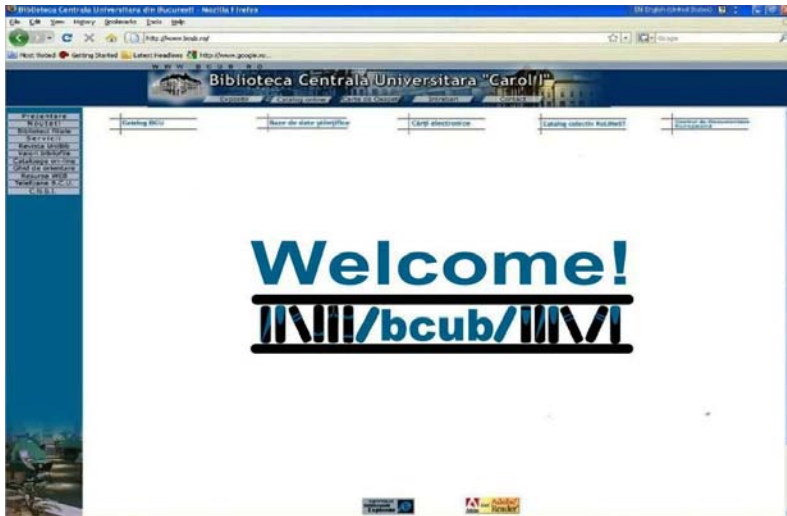


Figure 6. The new website of CUL-B "Carol I"

- *promotional materials*: CUL-B "Carol I" currently uses promotional materials such as: booklets, leaflets, post cards, pocket calendars and bookmarks. To integrate them in the rebranding process, it is necessary to operate a change of both shape and content. For this purpose, we consider as appropriate *printing some booklets and leaflets that are less lengthy in content than the current ones and that are fully and really read by the library's users due to their essential informational representation*. As far as the changes of shape are concerned, they have to look to gain a pleasant aspect for the new promotional materials that would line out the logo of the library, to confer it identity. CUL-B "Carol I" could also diversify the range of instruments used for the communication with its users, by *creating posters and advertisements* that would be the core of some aggressive campaign for promoting

reading in general and the library in particular. For this purpose we suggest publishing some posters (figure 7) that are displayed both at the library's notice board, as well as in public places and that reflect the power of information through the use of the motto: „We have 2 million books! Only for you!” (on 31st December 2008 the overall book fund of the library was of 1.912.718 books).

- *CUL-B "Carol I" Newspaper*: CUL-B "Carol I" publishing a newspaper that is available both at the campus and the internal network of Bucharest University, as well as at the library's headquarters for the wide public can be a good opportunity to communicate the news and information about the library. At the same time, encouraging students within the University to take part as newspaper editors can lead to an increase of their adhesion to the values of the library and a recognition of its brand.

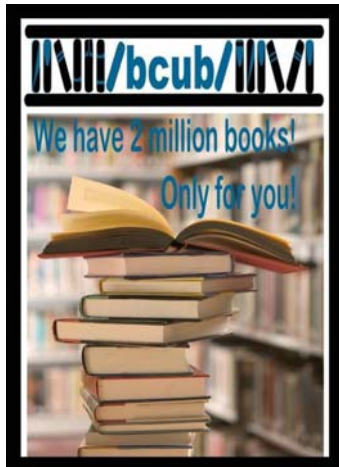


Figure 7. Suggestion of promotional poster: „We have 2 million books! Only for you!”

• *free accessories:* Distributing small gifts such as: mouse pads, glasses, peaked caps and T-shirts (figure 8) customized with the markings of the library; represents a good means of raising the awareness of readers about the "existence" of the library. It could go even further by using these marketing tools as a means to increase

the interest of the users in developing their library using skills. For this purpose, we recommend organization of campaigns for the library to distribute as promotional materials, tooth brushes that would have the motto: *"Brush up" on your library research skills!* (see figure 9).



Figure 8. Promotional materials: customized T-Shirts



Figure 9. Promotional materials: customized tooth brushes

• *advertising panels:* Using such devices for the promotion of a library can be perceived as something unusual by those who got used in seeing on these advertising panel publicity of famous brands such as Nokia, Coca-Cola etc. However, in strongly economically developed countries (especially in the USA), libraries have started to use more of these means for promoting their image. It therefore

becomes obvious that in order to build a strong brand CUL-B "Carol I" has to make use of strong means to communicate its message to the reading public. Consequently we consider as being appropriate *to place in the key areas of the capital city, some advertising panels that would contain the motto "Strong libraries build strong communities"* (figure 10).



Figure 10. Advertising panels having the motto: "Strong libraries build strong communities"

E. Development of the professional competences of the employees of CUL-B "Carol I" by constantly attending training courses

The lack of promptness in providing the services from the library's personnel, as well as the existence of a some kind of "coldness" in the behavior of the employees who interact with the reading public are some of the problems that directly affect the overall image of CUL-B "Carol I". Without an effective involvement of the human factor, the attempt to revive CUL-B "Carol I" brand becomes an increasingly difficult mission for the top management of the library. It doesn't really take into account the fact that the success of a brand depends on the people who promote it.

To be certain that all the personnel is able to promote the library and to efficiently communicate with the customers, the managers of CUL-B "Carol I" should ensure that staff ***attends adequate training programmes that would also include customer service techniques.***

After attending this kind of programmes, the employees of the library will be able to understand the essential role that they are playing in putting forth the message of the library and in satisfying the needs of its users. Also, to encourage competition between the employees we come up with the idea of ***setting up Regular Rewarding Schemes***, by which those members of staff who show outstanding customer service skills, are rewarded.

F. Realize an audio-video campaign to attract the library's users

If they are well administered, public relations of a library can represent in most of the cases, the key of success. CUL-B "Carol I" does not currently dispose of direct contacts, complex and systematic with the various categories of customers that

would enable it to maintain constant communication of its services and products' offer. From this point of view, the different events organized by the library (such as conferences, round table meetings, debates on current subject matters, new book acquisitions etc.) often risk to pass unnoticed by the reading public, because of insufficient media coverage. The main cause that is feeding this poor development of public relations is represented by the absence of co-operation between CUL-B "Carol I" and mass –media.

The spokespersons or other outstanding personalities of the library would have a greater impact over public, if they got involved and appeared in published interviews, in written press or on radio and TV shows, as well as in press articles written by them or by representatives of media about their activity. CUL-B "Carol I" could even recourse to advertising on TV as means of mass communication, with the purpose of informing the various categories of customers about the quality of the services they provide. Given that most of the users are students at Bucharest University, we consider that it would be appropriate ***developing a TV campaign*** which aims at attracting students who attend other Universities in Bucharest, for an intensive use of services provided by the library. We shouldn't miss out other means, much cheaper, by which the representatives of CUL-B "Carol I" can promote its image on TV: take part as guests in informative or cultural TV programmes.

G. Setting up an association of the libraries in Romania

The numerous deficiencies that characterize the marketing activity of CUL-B "Carol I" can be to some degree accounted to the lack of a real competition between libraries which stimulates the application of marketing

instruments and techniques in the info-documentary structures in the country. Despite all the efforts made in the most recent years, it becomes more and more difficult for this institution to keep up with the ongoing changing needs of its customers in the circumstances of an external environment that does not involve creativity and innovation.

To make possible the transition of Romanian libraries from a traditional approach to a marketing oriented approach, we suggest ***building a co-operation between CUL-B "Carol I" and the other institutions in the field in the country*** so that they found an association which would annually organize "The National Prize for Marketing" award. The purpose of this award would be to acknowledge the merits of those libraries able to develop and implement efficient marketing programmes. The projects sent by the representatives of all the libraries in the whole country will be assessed on the basis of some criteria such as: creativity and the degree of involvement brought by the project's solutions, the strategic marketing communication approach, the viability of the project and its capacity to attract public's attention in the long run, efficiency of the solutions for the improvement of marketing in libraries, applicants' constant engagement in the marketing activities and public relations etc. Also, the assessment of the projects will take into account the way the candidates understand to apply the four basic steps in a marketing process: market demand, market's segments, producing the marketing strategy for the four "P" and assessment of the marketing activity.

Conclusions

It is necessary for the Romanian library to adapt to the changes of a society found in full modernization process with the means it has available,

investing in intellect, active management and strategic marketing (Popescu, 2009, pp. 119-120). In this context, the efficient solution for the improvement of Romania libraries' activity is the orientation towards cultural communication partners to meet and satisfy their needs by providing fast and timely access to information, being well aware that time means money and information means power. Marketing becomes necessary in order to address the three issues: change of users and access, organize an industry of culture and information and innovate the services provided. A marketing approach is even more necessary as, nowadays, all the indicators of development of the demand for the type of product that the library is offering are increasing: increase of the spare time, of the hope for life, of the level of education, individualization of the cultural practices for public libraries, increase of the Academia etc. Libraries have to provide an attractive alternative to the public so that they are not distracted by other offers.

The development of Romanian libraries in the condition of an informational society is influenced by the understanding and application of an user-oriented organizational activity, in which each library assumes the role of generator of information and cultural products competitive on the market in the field and by which it meets and satisfies the spiritual needs of the existing and potential users and to diversify the spectrum of actions, to make it more attractive and dynamic and to promote itself by advertising (Enache & Maftai, 2003). Therefore, in the future, no libraries' system would be able to do without well structured library marketing services, accomplished by people specialized in this niche field, with an according cultural horizon.

REFERENCES

- Costache, G. (2002), *O abordare economică a bibliotecii: marketingul între teorie și practică*, București: Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Carol I”.
- Constantin, A. M. (2005), “Valori bibliofile în Biblioteca Centrală Universitară din București”, *Revista UniBib*, Nr. 12.
- Elliot de Sáez, E. (1997), *Marketing concepts for libraries and information services*, London: Library Association Publishing.
- Enache, I., Maftai, M. (2003), *Marketingul în bibliotecă*, București: Editura Universității din București.
- Enache, I. (2006), *Marketingul în structurile infodocumentare*, București: Editura Universității din București.
- Gupta, K.D., Koontz, C., Massisimo, A., Savard R. (2006), *Marketing Library and Information Services: International Perspectives*, München: K.G. Saur.
- Kotler, Ph., Levy, S.J. (1969), “Broadening the Concept of Marketing”, *Journal of Marketing* Vol. 33, pp. 10-15.
- Kotler, Ph. (1984), *Marketing management*, 5th ed., New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Munteanu, V. (2006), *Marketing public*, Iași: Editura Sedcom Libris.
- Popescu, I. (2008), “Rolul marketingului în îmbunătățirea activității bibliotecilor”, *Abordări moderne în managementul și economia organizației*, București: Editura ASE.
- Popescu, I. (2009), “Using Marketing in Romanian Libraries. Study Case: The Romanian National Library”, *Revista „Economia”, seria „Management”* Vol. 12, nr. 1, pp. 111-120.
- Salaun, J. M. (1992), *Marketing des bibliothèques et des centres de documentation*, Paris: Editions du Cercle de la Librairie.
- Government Emergency Ordinance no. 84/1998 concerning the creation of the Fund for financing the education system libraries*, published in the Official Monitor no. 315/1998.
- Law no. 205/2001 for approving the Government Emergency Ordinance no 84/1998 concerning the creation of the Fund for financing the education system libraries*, published in the Official Monitor no. 212/2001.
- Library Law no. 334/2002*, republished in the Official Monitor no. 132 from 11 February 2005.
- The Functioning Regulations of Central University Library „Carol I” in Bucharest* (2008). From Central University Library “Carol I”. Web site: www.bcub.ro.
- The Strategy of Development of Central University Library “Carol I” 2000-2003* (2000). From Central University Library “Carol I”. Web site: www.bcub.ro.
- The Strategy of Development of Central University Library “Carol I” 2008-2011* (2008). From Central University Library “Carol I”. Web site: www.bcub.ro.

**Survey form assessing the degree of satisfaction of Central University Library
“Carol I” Bucharest users’ need for information**

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor
1. What is the degree of success in finding the searched information within the collections of CUL-B “Carol I”? (How easy is it to use the online catalogue?)					
2. To what degree is your need for information satisfied from a point of view of the information found?					
3. How do you appreciate the quality of the databases to which CUL-B “Carol I” subscribes?					
4. How do you characterize the accessibility to the technique means used for getting informed? (access to the computers of CUL-B “Carol I”)					
5. To what degree the offer that our library provides overlaps with your need of access to a specific piece of information?					
POINT	5	4	3	2	1

Tick with an X the box that better fits your own opinion.

Please answer the questions in the survey above as honestly as you can so that we can improve the information searching methods, by using the feedback we are receiving from you.