



## Theme-of-the-Month Marketing: Here's How

by Herldine Radley, Theron Ramos, and Sharon Giles

Prior to September 2000, visitors to the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center Library in Dallas would have rarely noticed the library's marketing efforts as they walked through the public display areas. Posters, fliers, and table tents were randomly placed and appeared disorganized. Bulletin boards were cluttered, with old posters bumping up against new. The resulting hodgepodge diluted the marketing message being sent to our clients. At that time, no coordinated plan existed for publicizing products using different media, and the focus of the library's Marketing Team was primarily on publishing one-page information handouts about services and newsletters.

To address this confusion, two staff members working at the Information Desk, Herldine Radley and Theron Ramos, brainstormed ways to resolve the problem. Their solution was to identify a monthly focus or theme that would emphasize a specific library product or service. Different media would be coordinated for promotion. This proposal was endorsed by the library's director and submitted to the Marketing Team, coordinated by Sharon Giles.

### *The Marketing Team Sets the Theme*

The idea was happily incorporated into the library's marketing plan as one of the major strategies: "Target one product or service monthly as Theme of the Month." An action plan guides the team in developing the theme by determining steps, deadlines, and participants.

The first step is to solicit theme ideas from not only managers, Marketing Team members, and other library staffers but also from the library's product managers—the designated people in charge of one or more electronic products.

During planning sessions held three times a year, the team determines which products and services will be targeted for the following 4 months. These planning sessions coincide with the library's overall strategic planning activities so we can select relevant targets. (Theme examples have included services like SciFinder Scholar and technology like PDAs.)

Once the upcoming themes have been determined, a team member is selected to be the "theme owner" who coordinates the various marketing efforts. The theme owner can either do all of the production or ask an expert on the resource to write an article, provide an image, or create some of the marketing materials. Once materials are developed, they are critiqued and edited by the team and other parties interested in that month's subject. We concentrate on consistency in both design and message.

### *Weapons in the Multimedia Assault*

Theme of the Month is a multimedia assault to get the attention of more than 20,000 primary clients, including busy health professionals and faculty and overwhelmed residents and students. Our premise is that a little repetition is good reinforcement. Typically, we use these methods:

**Articles:** Brief articles are published in both electronic and print newsletters. Articles are first distributed in the library's biweekly e-mail newsletter, InfoLibrary, and then displayed on the Library News page on our Web site. Most are then reprinted in the bi-monthly print newsletter, *Information Times*, which is jointly published with several university departments.

**Posters and fliers:** Laminated, 8.5 x 11-inch posters are displayed in strategic library areas, such as an entrance sign case, and an elevator bulletin board. They are designed with Microsoft Publisher, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Macromedia Fireworks, and some double as fliers. Our new color copier allows us to produce them cheaply and in larger sizes.

**Web banners:** A Web banner is also designed using both text and graphics to be consistent with the other media. Currently, a static or billboard-type banner is created instead of an animated image, and it is then linked specifically to the electronic resource or to the theme article. Recent research had indicated that a significant percentage of our clients resented banners that distracted them or affected page loading. To minimize client alienation, the static banners appear only on the library's secondary Web pages.

**Slide shows:** The most recent enhancement to the theme idea is a slide show running near the library's entrance on an Iomega FotoShow device connected to a television. Slides are produced in PowerPoint and then saved as JPEG images to a Zip disk. However, because Iomega has ceased producing the FotoShow, we'll need to develop alternatives. Some possibilities are creating PowerPoint presentations or Macromedia Flash movies and running them on a computer. Videos also could be produced and exploited on the home page; streaming signs could help.

Our Theme-of-the-Month strategy has made our message clearer. And using multimedia gets our clients' attention. To see examples, go to <http://www.3.utsouthwestern.edu/library/staff/MLA03/MLAThemeoftheMonthPoster2003.pdf>. \*

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