



## Using marketing in Romanian libraries Study case: The Romanian National Library

*Utilizarea marketingului în bibliotecile românești  
Studiu de caz: Biblioteca Națională a României*

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### Abstract

*Nowadays, marketing has become a central part of libraries' interest worldwide. Their motivation is varied: the missions of organizations have lost compatibility with market demand, budgets are low, while their units require more funds, the increase in the competition for funding, the harsh competition between service suppliers, etc. Furthermore, the Western world understood the necessity of library marketing for reasons like: the support offered in library management, the focus on consumers, the capacity of attracting consumers to use libraries, the improvement of the organization's image. Despite all that, most Romanian libraries do not understand the part played by marketing in the library or in the information service, as well as its usefulness in day-to-day activities. The purpose of this essay is to present the importance of marketing in the National Romanian Library's activity.*

**Keywords:** *library marketing, libraries mix marketing, product, distribution, price, promotion*

### Rezumat

*În prezent, interesul bibliotecilor din diferite părți ale lumii asupra marketingului a crescut simțitor. Cele mai importante motive au fost: misiunea organizațiilor nu mai corespundea cererilor de pe piață; bugetele erau mai mici, dar unitățile cereau ajutor mai mare; locurile de recrutare și atragere de fonduri deveneau din ce în ce mai competitive; competiția între furnizorii de servicii similare era din ce în ce mai acerbă etc. Au existat, desigur, și alte motive pentru care lumea occidentală a înțeles necesitatea aplicării marketingului în biblioteci: sprijinul în administrarea mai eficientă a bibliotecii; implicarea în focalizarea pe consumator; determinarea utilizatorilor să folosească mereu biblioteca; îmbunătățirea imaginii organizației. Cu toate acestea, cele mai multe biblioteci din România nu înțeleg încă locul marketingului în bibliotecă sau în cadrul serviciului de informare și cum este acesta folositor în activitățile lor de zi cu zi. În această lucrare voi*

*încerca să prezint importanța marketingului în cadrul activității Bibliotecii Naționale a României.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *marketingul bibliotecilor, mixul de marketing al bibliotecilor, produs, distribuție, preț, promovare*

**JEL Classification:** M31

## Introduction

The National Romanian Library is a cultural institution subordinated to the Culture and Cults Ministry, responsible for managing the national cultural wealth of publications (books, newspapers), manuscripts, old books, incunabulum, maps, photographs, audio-visual materials and electronic documents (Library Law 2002, 2005). In order to fulfill its essential mission of guaranteeing quality access to its collections to both present and future generations, the National Romanian Library has the responsibility of purchasing, processing, preserving and using efficiently all types of documents of the national cultural treasure ([www.bibnat.ro](http://www.bibnat.ro)).

The National Romanian Library does not have a marketing department, fact reflected also by the lack of any in-depth activity in this domain. Still, there are two departments with responsibility in this area ([www.bibnat.ro](http://www.bibnat.ro)):

➤ the Research and Development Service ensures research coordination in fundamental areas of library economy and information service and implementing their results in order to develop and optimize the National Romanian Library's activity.

➤ the Cultural Events Promotion Bureau is responsible for promoting the activities of the National Romanian Library as an institution and for the cultural treasure it holds. Its responsibilities are:

- the elaboration and application of the National Romanian Library's promotion policy
- programming the cultural agenda of the National Romanian Library
- supporting the relationship with the press
- monitoring and analyzing the application of library indicators and of specific procedures

## Marketing mix in the National Romanian Library

The inexistence of a department specialized in marketing leads to the inexistence of an appropriate marketing program of the National Romanian Library. Still, indirectly, through its activities, ([www.bibnat.ro](http://www.bibnat.ro)) the library has a fairly obvious product/service, price and distribution policy.

### *A. Product/service policy*

#### 1) Bibliophile

⇒ 141 incunabulum – 2 of them are very important. Firstly, “Danse macabre”, published in 1490 represents the only Latin translation of a French medieval ballad. It is a very rare book, as there are only 7 known copies worldwide. The second is “Johannes de Capua, Directorium Humanie vitae alias parabola antiquorum sapientum”, published in 1489 in Strasborg, a richly illustrated, rare edition with only one copy found in Romania;

⇒ Old books – this collection unites authentic cultural monuments: “The Liturgy Man”, printed at the Dealu Monastery in 1508, “The Apostle” printed at Targoviste by Dimitrie Liubavici in 1547 (the only copy available in the country), the 1652 “The Correction of the Law” work, “The Psalms in Verse” (1673, the copy includes corrections and additions made by Dosoftei himself) and “The Bible of Stefan Cantacuzino” published in 1688 and old foreign books, in princeps editions, original or definitive editions including comments made by Donatus, Erasmus, Melanchton, Bude;

⇒ Rare books;

⇒ Detachable papers: political proclamations, electoral manifestos, official declarations from the reuniting war, posters, calendars, theatrical programs (some of great refinement, written on silk), school events’ programs.

2) Documentary materials require special attention. The collection has exquisite Latin, Arabic, Persian manuscripts, along with religious Slavic and Greek manuscripts.

3) Important documents and papers of the Historic Archive are structured in the subsequent funds:

- “Mihail Kogălniceanu” - 1162 files
- “Ion C. Brătianu” - 724 files
- “Alexandru Saint-Georges” - 5804 files

4) The historical testimonials – most of them having a surprising character – reveal significant facets of the construction process of the modern Romanian society, a process which has been complex, ample and with profound echoes and linked national realities to the western ones.

5) Old Romanian periodicals collection reunites periodicals from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century (until 1948), calendars and almanacs, yearbooks and annals, various bulletins, information newspapers, organs of political parties, cultural, literary, historical, juridical, economic magazines, etc.

The Graphic Fund of the Prints Cabinet contains:

- Romanian drawings: 7000 bibliographic units
- Foreign drawings: 240 bibliographic units
- Romanian Engravings: 3400 bibliographic units

- European foreign Engravings: 5300 bibliographic units
- Japanese prints: 840 bibliographic units
- Ex-libris: 18000 bibliographic units
- Albums containing original engravings: 253 bibliographic units

6) 19 and 20<sup>th</sup> century chronicles, original photography collections (91.440) and illustrated postcards (about 18.572) – pertaining to the Photography Cabinet – represent an artistic and documentary authentic thesaurus. The photo collection reminds the public of the faces of famous people: personalities of Romanian spirituality, science and arts representatives, writers, political people, diplomats, members of the royal family ([www.bibnat.ro](http://www.bibnat.ro)).

7) The Cartography Cabinet contains 3661 maps and 1084 atlases forming the documentary fund. The public has access to historical and military maps, geological, soil, hydrographic, vegetation maps, as well as city and land plans and typographical sketches.

The publications of the National Library are: national references, library economy, translations, methodologies, summaries, the National Library's magazine, the Ex-Libris Catalogue. These are published annually by the library and are offered for sale according to the number of copies available or if a person buys a subscription.

The Library's service policy confirms the specificity of national libraries which, being public institutions, cannot assimilate their own revenues, while the types of beneficiaries (mainly, young people, researchers, retired people) are against the status of the library, being social classes discriminated on financial grounds.

Most of the postal services provided by the National Romanian Library are free: enrollment, loan, internal loan between libraries, the CIP service, etc. Since 2007, the computer room has an Internet service.

### *B. Price policy*

According to the law, The National Romanian Library, being a public institution, cannot assimilate its own revenues, the whole funding of its activity being supported by the state budget (Library Law 2002, 2005).

However, public libraries are presently attempting to change the law of libraries, so that a part of their revenues can remain there; they are trying to succeed in doing so by creating activities at increased prices for the private sector, for example, data basis for entrepreneurs (Enache, 2006).

Most of the services offered by the Library are free of charge (the basic services), but there are services provided at a certain price, as:

- ◆ photocopying services which is frequently provided by a specialized firm

- ◆ references services at demand at different prices conditioned by category type: 2 lei for students, 5 lei for private consumers and 1,5 lei for firms)
- ◆ international borrowing service which can be paid for in stamps
- ◆ editing service at a price of 10 lei for ISBNs

The prices for the publications are established depending on the expenditures made by the library for: papers, covers, editing, wages, etc. These are calculated by specialized staff, the result being the cost of a copy.

The National Romanian Library can be supported financially, culturally and scientifically by foundations or other nongovernmental organisms, economic agents and simple consumers.

### *C. Promotion and distribution policy*

The National Romanian Library is involved in different cultural events, especially book fairs where it can distribute products and services to a larger category of consumers and to the usual clients of the library. The activity of product and service promotion represents one of the vital points of the strategic development plan of the National Library. Book fairs are a good way of advertising these products and services in the Romanian cultural and educational background, contributing to the strengthening of the Library's social role. In 2007 ([www.bibnat.ro](http://www.bibnat.ro)) the National Romanian Library participated at all the 3 international book fairs: Bookfest (6-10<sup>th</sup> of June), Gaudeamus – educational books (21-25<sup>th</sup> of November), participated at selling exhibitions for products and services, used promotion materials, conferences and launching events.

Besides these important events, the National Romanian Library is constantly participating at different cultural events under different forms: “Young artists at the National Romanian Library – painting, graphic and photography exhibition” – 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2007; “The role of France in creating modern Romania – 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2007 (the “Francophile in the public and private life of private Romania” exhibition – books, manuscripts and photos from the National Romanian Library's collections); the War of Independence in documents – 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2007 (the National Romanian Library exhibited on the of 25<sup>th</sup> October the War of Independence in documents: 1877-2007 exposition, during which books, telegrams, postal cards, letters, detachable papers, official writings, photos, prints, periodicals and pieces of the Special Collections of the National Library were shown, as well as some interesting pieces from the I.C. Rogojanu library); 125 years of stock market activity in Romania (with the occasion of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bucharest Stock Market – 1887-2007- the National Library organized a press conference, as well as a spectacular exhibition of stocks, property titles, etc); the days of the National Romanian Library.

### **How can the activity of marketing be improved in the case of the National Romanian Library?**

Taking into consideration the present situation, Romanian libraries need to become aware of the necessity to take action to continuously modernize library services and to introduce some elements of marketing in their activity (Popescu, 2009).

The National Romanian Library does not have a marketing department, and this situation must be repaired immediately. This aspect depends on the management division of the Library, department that has to understand the weight of such a division in the development of the library, in attracting new consumers and in efficiently fulfilling its objectives. In order to attain these goals, the existence of specialized staff with higher education is also significant, and of course, the possibility of participating in forming programs. Moreover, the creation and promotion of a marketing strategy and policy are necessary in order to optimize the library's image and to identify opportunities for attracting external funding. The key for success of the National Romanian Library could be a concept coordinated and closer to the private sector (as long as this is possible and legal). Although the whole library should be responsible for the marketing activity, this function can be properly managed only by a specialized department. This unit should administer the aspects connected with the development of collections, Internet access, informing abilities, etc. but also collaborate with other departments or bureaus connected between them (Munteanu, 2006) such as: special collections, virtual search, research assistance, etc. The objectives and purposes of the marketing departments must be clearly specified and could involve:

- The responsibility for the coordination of marketing activities of the National Romanian Library, mainly focusing on: forming the staff, publications, marketing programs or public relations initiatives;
- Identifying the needs of different stakeholders groups of the Library and the development of services in order to satisfy these needs. They can use: focus-groups, suggestion forms, informal feedback mechanisms, polls, questionnaires;
- The improvement of communication means with the library's stakeholders by using different methods such as: sending news connected to the Library's activity, communication with a precise target, electronic publications or informal networks;
- The increase of the Library's profile in this sector and the advertising of the services offered through properly promoting the Library;
- The increase in awareness in marketing and applying it in the Library's practices, adapting it according to the internal environment and its influences.

The most important objective of the marketing department must be the focus on the consumer. The definition of marketing, given by the Institute for Marketing is: "Marketing is the management process which efficiently

and profitably identifies and satisfies the requirements of the consumer” (Gupta et al.). Firstly, the marketing department, as part of the institution, must keep in mind the efficient use of resources and innovation (a long term perspective), but above all, through its nature, the department must begin its tasks with the client and concentrate on him before any other activity.

Apart from this, the National Romanian Library could begin a cooperation campaign with other libraries and why not, even establish a National Library Authority with an important part in the development of the public library system. Also, the library could propose a common network for the Romanian library system, including free Internet access. Thus, the user could find through this common network media collections, including books, newspapers, music, videos and multimedia materials. Of course, the library should charge annual fees from users for the services offered. These purposes involve the participation of some specialized people from various domains and from the Government as well. The National Romanian Library, as a main institution in this area, must be the “glue” in these collaboration actions.

The library should have a good relationship, from the marketing point of view, with the media, daily providing news and information for the local newspapers about its activity. A solid tie with the local and central press could promote positive information about the institution, while this way of publicity could attract the attention of the people who are not using library services. In addition to this, the significance of this action is given by its impact on politicians who desire to know if the resources allocated to libraries are used in a positive way for the citizens. It is important to have a staff that interacts with other organizations so that you can make libraries more visible.

Marketing must be perceived by the National Library as the sum of integrated disciplines: market research, public relations, publicity, promotion and consumers’ services. These domains must be integrated in a single plan that could stimulate the need of the user to come to the library; it is sure that once he comes, he will come back. One element that could influence the decisions of potential consumers is the library card. Creating a unique library card could represent creating a brand for the library, identified as the power of informing and the resources held by the library. Such a campaign could also be efficient because the library can attain the characteristics of an institution orientated to the market, but at the same time, keeping in mind its mission. These qualities are: knowing the market (identifying, measuring the markets which the library focuses on); treating every person as a consumer (financial supporters, management, staff and the people using the services must be viewed as users); including everybody in a marketing team (the library must develop the idea according to which every person in the library is crucial to the success of the marketing campaign); constant innovation (in order to respond as best as possible to market changes and consumers’ needs, the library must become flexible, staff must be encouraged to take chances in favor of the users).

Another element that the National Romanian Library must keep in mind is creating a powerful brand. A branding campaign must introduce the brand in the interior of the organization, in each decision made by the staff and felt by the consumer. The staff must be offered assistance in the process of identifying the key factors of satisfying consumers' needs. The management of the brand, especially where the human factor is involved, is a difficult process for the brand manager, taking into consideration that every person involved brings his or hers experiences and opinions to the brand. The personnel must be emotionally involved in the library, as the only way of convincing users is the promotion made by the employees. The creation of a logo is part of the branding process, as this represents the personality and the quality services provided by the institution. The logo is useful in order to recognize the brand and is an important instrument in marketing, a tool that the library should use (Elliot de Sáez, 1997). Due to innovation that the introduction of the logo brings, this must be tested on the employees, while their feedback must be a positive one. In order to do this, the institution can collaborate with a branding company meant to create the interpretations given by some employees who are able to identify the organizational qualities of the library. In the case of the National Romanian Library the process of branding must be started abruptly. Its success highly depends on the recognition of the importance of the institution, in the contact of the potential user with the logo and with the whole brand represented by the library. This kind of exercise is a quite expensive one, but if it is applied correctly and optimally by the library, the financial resources and time invested will pay off. Some examples of applying or improving the organization's brand can be: people (attracting the attention on the qualities of the brand and the attention focused on the user); accessories (the distribution of bookmarks, pencils, pens, caps, glasses with the institution's logo); interior decorations (color is a very important aspect which can influence the state of mind of customers and employees); any means of communication (brochures, flyers); Internet pages (the access to Internet should reflect the strength of the brand and be able to communicate what the brand offers); posters; cards; clothing; conferences, symposiums and other presentations opened to the public, etc..

With regard to the mix of marketing and its components, the National Library must be aware of its meaning and analyze each part of the mix.

In the first place, the library's products are represented by the materials it holds, very important being their conservation not only for the library but for its users and even for the national treasure. The product can be considered the most important element of the marketing mix (Olteanu, 2003), which can be offered on the market in order to satisfy a need. In the case of the library, the product should include books, journals available in a printed form, on CDs or online, as well as services like non-stop working hours, answering questions service, providing news, references, data bases, documents, consultations, training in using information and experiences through face-to-face, telephone, fax, e-mail interaction with people,



facilities such as furniture, library atmosphere, using computers and other equipment.

Price is an element that has been neglected in the past (frequently even in the present) by libraries and librarians. Legislation presently applied to libraries does not allow charging fees for loaning books or offering information. Still, libraries worldwide have begun to charge fees for searches through data bases, for interlibrary loan, for e-mail references services and for the informing library system. Although the National Romanian Library is attempting to introduce these elements, the process is a slow one due to the inexistence of specialized staff to create strategies and policies in this area. Price is the most crucial problem of the marketing mix in libraries (Elliot de Sáez, 1997), as fixing prices represents a strategic decision regarding many issues, such as:

⇒ Which are the costs involved in generating services and products? Which factors or parameters must be taken into consideration when establishing costs? Which of these factors must be searched into and which ignored and why?

⇒ Should information services be free of charge? If yes, for whom and why? Which would be the impact on the value of the products, if this were free?

⇒ If products and services are charged, which should be the criteria for fixing prices? Recuperating the cost? Partial or marginal recuperation? Should there be taken into consideration a variable price based on the financial possibilities of users? Should there be added a profit to the cost?

⇒ Who should be charged – internal customers, external ones or both categories? Which should be the effect of product prices on the users? Would they be able to pay? Would the demand decrease and at what level if the products are charged?

When the price is fixed, the level of comfort, security, credit, speed, simplicity, collecting and automatization procedures play important parts in improving the consumers' satisfaction.

Last but not least, promotion has a significant function in the marketing mix in the library area. Libraries must forget the traditional conception according to which users are the ones contacting libraries and try to attract as many consumers as possible (clients) through extremely powerful, even aggressive promoting campaigns. This process includes all the means of communication with users. People involved in library marketing must do more than observe the interior action, they must look outside in order to discover the needs of users and to be able to address these needs and thus attract more funding.

### **Conclusion**

The Romanian library must adapt to the changes of a society found in a full process of modernizing using all the means possible, investing in intelligence, active management and strategic marketing. Romanian libraries must orientate

their activity to cultural communication partners, must satisfy their requests by enabling their access to quick and cheap information, knowing that time is money and information is power. Marketing becomes necessary in order to address 3 main problems: changing users and using processes, organizing a cultural industry and providing information and constant innovation in services. A marketing approach is more and more needed as all the development indicators of demand are increasing: the increase of free time, life expectancy, education level, specifying cultural practices for public libraries, increase of university environment. Libraries must be ready if they do not wish their customers to go elsewhere.

One of the key factors which will influence the survival of libraries in this informational society is giving up this traditional inertia of Romanian libraries. This kind of institution must produce information and competitive cultural items on the market, which needs to address the spiritual needs of real and potential users, to diversify the chromatic of actions, to be attractive and dynamic and to promote itself through publicity (Enache and Maftai, 2003). Therefore, in the future, no library system will be able to dispose of a well structured library marketing service, which must be added to every library institution of local importance by a marketing specialist who should also have an appropriate cultural level.

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