The background features several large, curved arrows in shades of blue and white, pointing upwards and to the right. There are also faint, concentric circles scattered across the light blue background. The text is positioned on the right side of the page.

# Marketing 101: expanding the library's customer base

**To increase the number of library cardholders, the Board and the staff first need to be sure people know about the library:**

- where it is
- when it's open
- what it has
- what services and programs it offers
- that it offers value - "treasure for your toonie"
- that it's user-friendly
- that it enhances daily life

## where the library is

Include your street address and/or the name of the building in everything you write about the library. Vary the description of your location. Try:

- conveniently located next to the Senior's Drop-In Centre
- across the street from coffee row
- at the south end of the school
- in the only red brick building on main street
- just steps away from the town office

## when the library is open

Library hours are confusing! It's common for libraries to open different hours each of the three to seven days a week they're open. Put your hours (and location) on posters, brochures, bookmarks, whatever - and distribute them around the community. Advertise your hours in the newspaper or school newsletter - the cost is minimal.

## what the library has

In the spring, offer a display of gardening books to greenhouses and stores that sell seeds and bedding plants. Include a poster or sign and bookmarks with your hours.

In the fall, do something similar in the grocery store with canning and freezing books. You could make bookmarks with a tomato or zucchini recipe on one side, credited to the book you copied it from and on the other side a message such as "For dozens of other ways to use your abundant crop of zucchini, check out the cookbooks at the ABC library. The library is open (these hours). You'll find us just behind the town office."

Talk to service clubs, support groups and other organizations. Take books, CDs and DVDs to show off, and give everyone a bookmark or brochure. Talk to the Chamber of Commerce about business resources—print and electronic—available through your library. Show off large print and travel books to seniors groups. Tell them they can stay in touch with their grandkids by email at the library.

Tell multicultural groups that you can get books in other languages for their members and that newspapers from around the world are available online – [www.kidon.com/media-link/index.php](http://www.kidon.com/media-link/index.php). Tell them about Tell Me More (Auralog) Language Training.

Tell travel agents that you have — or have access to — travel guides to absolutely everywhere.

Do you have a 'registration package' for people who are getting a card for the first time? These can be made ahead of time. Include:

- e-resource brochure.
- TRACpac brochure
- Library brochure or bookmark with library hours

Cont'd  
what the  
library has

Connect with your newspaper. When it does a supplement on home renovation or weddings or travel or whatever, be ready to give them a booklist — or more.

Write an article for the newspaper: "Tips to improve your golf swing," using information from one or two of your golfing books. Mention the titles of the books that you used to find the tips. Say that they — and many other books — are available from the ABC library, which is open Monday and Wednesday afternoons and Tuesday and Thursday evenings. (Sometimes, newspapers consider actual hours advertising so will cut them from your news release). Ask the paper to print it on the sports page. Do the same with curling and hockey in the fall. By the way, have you ever told the soccer or baseball coach about your books on soccer and baseball?

Set up a display of craft books at a bazaar or gardening and preserving books at the farmer's market. Take your hours bookmarks to hand out. Hand out library card registration forms.

what services and  
programs  
the library offers

Do kindergarten teachers, play school and day care staff know about story time?

Have you told summer fun program staff about the summer reading program?

Do teens in your community know about the Teen Reading Club?

Do you offer shut-in service or service to lodges? If you do, does the rest of the community know?

Have you talked to your customers about assistive technology in your library?

Where and how have you promoted interlibrary loan and reference services?

Have you kept it a secret that your rural members have the option of using the Paperbacks-by-Mail service or a paperback deposit?

Who knows about the Internet access you offer? Or the e-resources? Or TRACpac? [www.tracpac.ab.ca](http://www.tracpac.ab.ca) or [www.marigold.ab.ca](http://www.marigold.ab.ca)

Have you used any of the marketing tools that come with the licensed e-resources? Call Carlee at headquarters for some help.

Remind people constantly that their TRAC/TAL card can be used at libraries throughout Alberta — public, university, college and special. "Don't leave home without your library card."

Have you spread the word about RISE? Find lots of information on the RISE wiki at: <http://wikirise.pbwiki.com>

## the library offers value

Compare ...

- The cost of a library card to the cost of a book. (The average cost of a hard cover novel in the fall of 2008 was \$29.26)
- The cost of the levy the municipality pays per capita to the cost of a book, a movie, a day at the swimming pool, a dinner at a restaurant, whatever.
- How much the "average" borrower would have spent if they had purchased the books, videos, magazines, etc instead of borrowing them.

Make points about the cost of illiteracy, the value of information, how libraries support publishing and cultural industries. Your Consultant can help with background information.

## the library is user-friendly

Say:

- "Of course, we can get you that."
- "I saved this new book for you because I know you'll enjoy it."
- "Let me show you how to use the *Auto Repair Reference Center*."
- "Did you know that with your library card you have access to our *Hobbies and Crafts* e-resource from home?"

## the library enhances daily life

Your library offers a wealth of information as well as large print books, books in other languages, CDs and DVDs, and the best and most popular books for toddlers, children and teens.

## test-drive the library

Make sure that it is easy for people to check out the library, its resources and services.

Give a free library card to every kindergarten or grade one child in the fall. They'll bring in their parents or older siblings.

Offer a three or six month free library card through Welcome Wagon or during Canadian Library Month.

Draw for a free or discounted library card when you speak to a group or at a display. Headquarters can help you prepare a display and lend you display boards - call Carlee or one of the Consultants.

Promote library cards as the ideal gift or Christmas stocking stuffer.

Invite groups for tours or to meet in the library.

Pick specific grades — e.g. 1,4, 7 and 10 — and visit them annually to encourage the students to get cards. Talk with your Consultant about ideas for the visits.

## partnerships

The library has common ground with many organizations and agencies. Partnerships can create mutually beneficial opportunities.

- Share resources with literacy organizations or offer tutoring space.
- Hobby groups may be "untapped" – tell them you have quilting, painting, chess, whatever resources. Offer to display their work.
- Be sure the library is on the town's website even if you have your own site.

## Programs

List your programs in Continuing Education brochure for the area

Programs encourage people to use and support libraries. Programs educate, inform and/or entertain participants.

- Story time can be targeted to preschool children, or to babies/toddlers. It can be in French or Spanish.
- Pajama story time early in the evening.
- Homework clubs, travel nights, author visits or talks by an “expert” attract people.
- Of course, Summer Reading is very popular with the kids. Think about a program or a coffee break for moms while the kids are occupied.
- No time? Add smaller programs more often.
- The Teen Reading Club is online year-round. Talk to your Consultant. <http://www.teensrc.ca/>

## get out there

Reward your regular customers with contests and other opportunities, such as when they bring a new customer to the library, where the prizes are free or discounted library card renewals.

Remember that the best place to promote the library and what it offers is any place outside the library. Call Carlee if you need a display or other material.

Headquarters staff can help you plan a targeted library card campaign and provide promotional materials. Call Karen, Carlee or a Consultant.

You can partner with agencies or businesses to market the library.

## your library's website

Your home page could be the ultimate marketing tool to promote events, collections, technology, popular material and various services. It's a good idea to get feedback from your customers when creating your website. What you may think is slick and polished might be considered cluttered and messy by your customers. Can customers quickly find what they're looking for? Are graphics slow to load — will customers become impatient? Are some of your customers still on dial-up? How does your site look on an iPhone or other hand held device? So many concepts to consider!

Don't have your own site?

- Collaborate with communication staff at your municipal office to make sure there is a link to the library on the municipal website. Provide them with content.
- If your school district has a website perhaps they could show a link to the library or mention the library in their online newsletter. Take the initiative to contact them and provide them with content.

Working on your website? Take a look at the features of a few Marigold member library sites:

Okotoks at: <http://www.okotokslibrary.ca/>

Drumheller at: <http://www.drumhellerlibrary.ca/>

Chestermere at: <http://www.chestermerepubliclibrary.com/>

Canmore at: <http://canmorelibrary.ab.ca/>

Airdrie at: <http://airdriepubliclibrary.ca/>

your municipality has a vested interest in having a highly visible, widely used library

Many people check out the library before considering moving to a community. Your municipality may be able to assist you with mailings (included in the water bill or whatever) or by having your promotional items displayed and available for pick up at their office or included in the municipality's online or printed newsletter.

Repeat, repeat, repeat!  
Tell the library story often.  
Tell it imaginatively.  
Tell it with fervor and passion.  
Tell people about the library every chance you get.

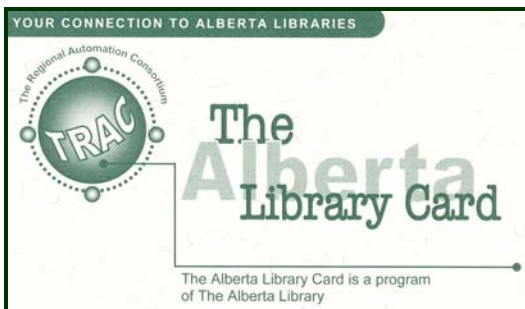
Be consistent in your image. Adopt a logo (or two) and/or a phrase or two and use them often. "You're always welcome @ ABC library"

Share your success stories with your council, headquarters staff and in the Newsletter and Marigold Report.

Do something special during Canadian Library Month, Freedom to Read Week, on literacy days, on your anniversary, when you renovate or add a new service, when the sun shines, whenever!

why all customers should have their own library card

- Accurate statistics help show the importance of library to funders and decision makers.
- Showing a library card at check-out minimizes error – chance of materials being checked out to wrong name.
- Ensures opportunity for using other libraries across Alberta.
- Respects FOIP legislation.
- Fosters responsibility in children.



Discover new worlds @ your library  
Get your facts straight @ your library

use Marigold publications as a resource

**Marigold Newsletter** — shares information and ideas around the system and offers ideas/tips to create awareness of special promotions and initiatives in the library community.

**E-resources @ your library** — explores Marigold's licensed databases to help you talk to your customers.

**Advocacy! @ your library** — creates an understanding of advocacy, lobbying, marketing, public relations and promotion for Marigold member libraries, provides tips and suggestions / samples.

**Marigold Report** — informs Marigold Board and local boards about governance and creates awareness of Marigold trends and issues.

**Notes to Council** — creates awareness of Marigold's support for events in the library community such as Freedom to Read, Web Awareness; provides information about the work of the Board.

back issues available on Marigold's website:

<http://www.marigold.ab.ca/publications.html>

