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Marketing to Libraries

Publishing for Library Markets

by Barry Lee (President, The Reference Society) <research@juno.com>

Publishing for Library Markets published by Cowles Simba Information (1997, 0-88709-149-7, $1495) is one of the many special reports Cowles Simba puts out each year.

This report is composed of eight chapters and includes over 50 tables to illustrate its statistical key highlights of the report follow:

The libraries questioned spent over $4.5 billion on information in 1996, up almost 8.5% from the previous year. CD software was the fastest growing media type.

In spite of the rapid increases in electronic media, information is still found predominately in print which makes up 72% of sales to libraries. The most revenue was generated by books, followed by periodicals and journals.

Library budgets have not grown dramatically, although various segments have shown growth. The results show shifts in materials budgets.

Despite an increase in electronic products, publishers reported using traditional methods to reach the library market. The three top methods were direct mail, advertising, and displays at library conferences.

Last year, the revenues from electronic information products accounted for 28% of the entire market.

As of 1996, the United States contained over 138,000 libraries. School libraries accounted for the greatest segment, followed by public, special, and academic libraries.

The academic libraries accounted for approximately half of total print sales to the library market. Their greatest expenditures were for journals. The Special Library segment spent the most for online services.

Libraries accounted for approximately 10% of trade publishers' revenues last year. Many trade publishers created separate marketing divisions to go after the library market. Almost 10% of total book revenues came from the library market.

Professional books, university press, and children's books sold well to libraries.

CD software sales are expected to grow at spectacular rates.

Over three quarters of public library funding comes from local sources. State funding ran about 12% while federal funds account for about 1%.

Online vendors continue the trend of moving their content and services to the Web.

Large international publishing conglomerates continued to dominate the library market.

Libraries are using consortia and co-ops to negotiate better deals.

CD encyclopedias are stealing market share from traditional print.

The study predicts that the market for online delivery of information will reach $1 million by the millennia.


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Gail Schlachter Interview

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GS: When asked to list the rules to successful writing, David Hedlyer responded “1. Have something to say. 2. Know how to say it, and 3. Be able to sell it.” A similar list could be offered librarians who are interested in becoming publishers. It would read: identify a need, use your library skills to fill it, and learn how to sell it. Some more advice: Save up a nest egg and be willing to risk it all on your dream. And, make sure you really want to give up your 8-hour plus day working for someone else for the 16 hours a day you may have to spend working for yourself.

There you have it! Lots of new ideas and topics of conversation to pursue when you see Gail in Charleston! — KS