



WESTCHESTER
LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

2026 Mid-Winter
Conference

Intentional Outreach: Connection, Collaboration, and Community

Friday February 27, 2026 9:45 a.m. -10:30a.m.

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Agenda

- Redefining Library Culture
- What is Intentional Outreach?
- Why Should We Connect? Collaborate? Build Community?
- How to be “Intentional”
 - Research Your Users
 - Conduct a S.W.O.T. Analysis
 - Do Market Research
 - Identify Segments
 - Create an Outreach/Marketing Plan
 - Compose Tailored Messages
 - Make Data-Driven Decisions
 - Plan, Promote, Deliver
 - WOMM (word-of-mouth-marketing)
 - Cultivate Empathy
 - Be Deliberate
 - Respond to Change
 - Advocate
- Concluding Remarks



Redefining Library Culture

- Libraries no longer monopolize the information landscape
- We compete with Generative AI, Google, YouTube, TikTok, Wikipedia, Barnes and Noble
- We have always been collaborative, made connections, and fostered "community"
- We have always promoted democracy, literacy, access to information, and community support
- In this current political climate, we must be more deliberate in promoting our value



What is Intentional Outreach?

- Create authentic connections with specific target audiences
- Strategically plan and deliver high-impact programs
- Spark personalized and meaningful engagement
- Understand different users' needs
- Pursue partnerships to achieve tangible goals



Why Should We Connect?

- Libraries and library workers cultivate relationships
- We strive to provide equitable access for all
- Libraries connect the world to free internet and access to books
- We connect people to fact-based information and knowledge
- In this divisive political climate, libraries promote democracy and fight censorship



Why Should We Collaborate?

- Libraries and library workers are natural collaborators
- Naturally “share”
- We are opposite of siloed
- We seek opportunities for collaboration



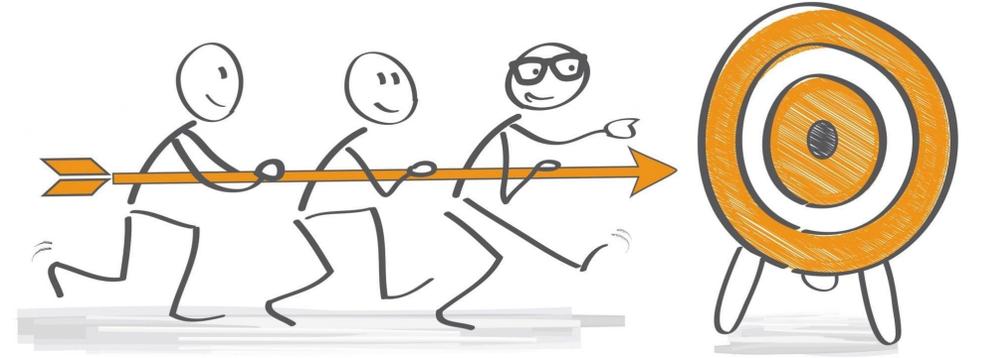
Why Should We Build Community?

- Humans flourish in groups
- Communities support each other during difficult times
- Libraries provide support to individuals with similar needs, goals, and values



How to be “Intentional”

- Focus on relationships, rather than transactions
- Conduct market research to learn about our users
- Target your marketing with tailored messaging
- Engagement (two-way) vs. Communications (one way)
- Being “intentional” benefits the library and its users



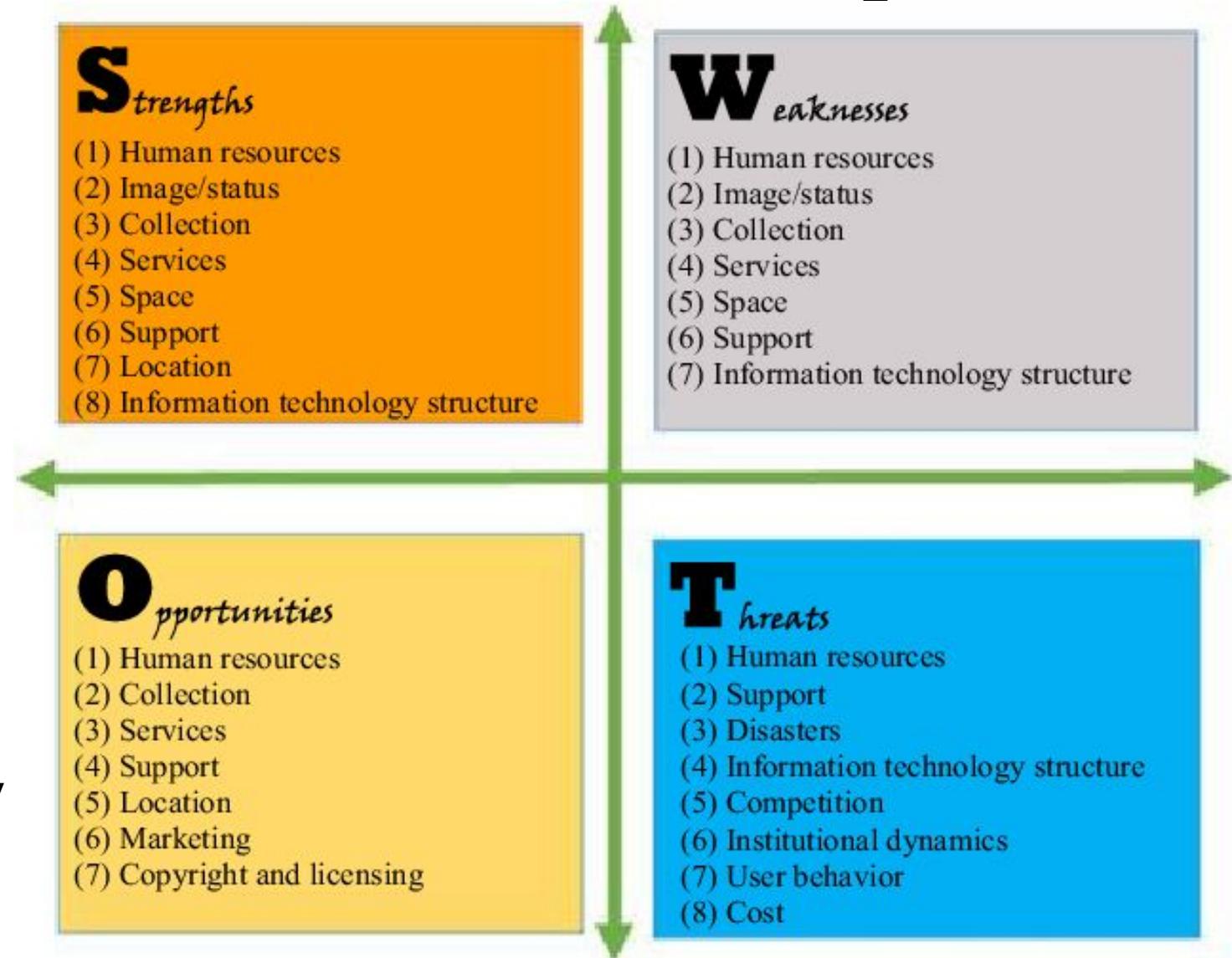
Research Your Users

- Conduct a SWOT analysis
- Do market research, collect data
- Identify different segments (users)
- Create an Marketing plan
- Compose tailored messages
- Make data-driven decisions
- Plan, promote, and deliver marketing activities that satisfy your users' needs and expectations



Conduct a S.W.O.T. Analysis

- Self assessment tool that explores your library's strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities
- You can create a SWOT for any library service



Do Market Research

- Use primary and secondary data
- Administer surveys
- Interviews and focus groups
- A/B testing
- Usability studies
- Journal mapping and diary entries
- Observations (naturalistic, obtrusive, participant)
- Secondary data sources (U.S. Census, existing survey data, Gallup polls, GSS, ANES, NSSE, Pew Research)



Identify Segments

- After conducting market research, your segments will emerge
- Marketing/Outreach should be tailored differently to those segments
- Examples of segments: children, teens, seniors, new immigrants, researchers, parents



Identify Segments

- Different types of segments
 - Demographic
 - Geographic
 - Psychographic
 - Behavioral



Create an Outreach/Marketing Plan

- Strategic planning document that outlines your promotional efforts over a specific time
- Defines your target audiences, methods, and communications platforms to be used



Create an Outreach/Marketing Plan

- 6Ps: People, Process, Product, Price, Place, and Promotion
- Identifies tangible goals and objectives
- Serves as roadmap for connecting with your target market



Compose Tailored Messages

- Each segment (user group) has different needs
- Your messaging should be composed to reflect this
- Blanketed (generic) messages are ineffective and inauthentic



Make Data-Driven Decisions

- Marketing activities should be informed by data
- Upside-down marketing ---> when activities are implemented without data or evidence
- Activities, programs, promotions, and decisions should be made, and informed with data



Plan, Promote, Deliver (the fun stuff)

- Reading programs
- Resume/cover letter workshop
- Citizenship testing
- Tax preparation
- Book talks
- Author talks
- Computer classes



WOMM

(word-of-mouth marketing)

As front-line library workers, we can help influence users' opinions and perceptions

- Rehearse your elevator pitch
- Choose words strategically
- Identify the unique qualities of your library



Cultivate Empathy

- When you study your users, you gain empathy
- Step outside your own viewpoint
- Put yourself in someone else's shoes
- Beyond acknowledging someone's situation (sympathy)



Cultivate Empathy

- Deeper, non-judgmental understanding
- Involves compassion and care
- Active listening
- Break down your own personal biases



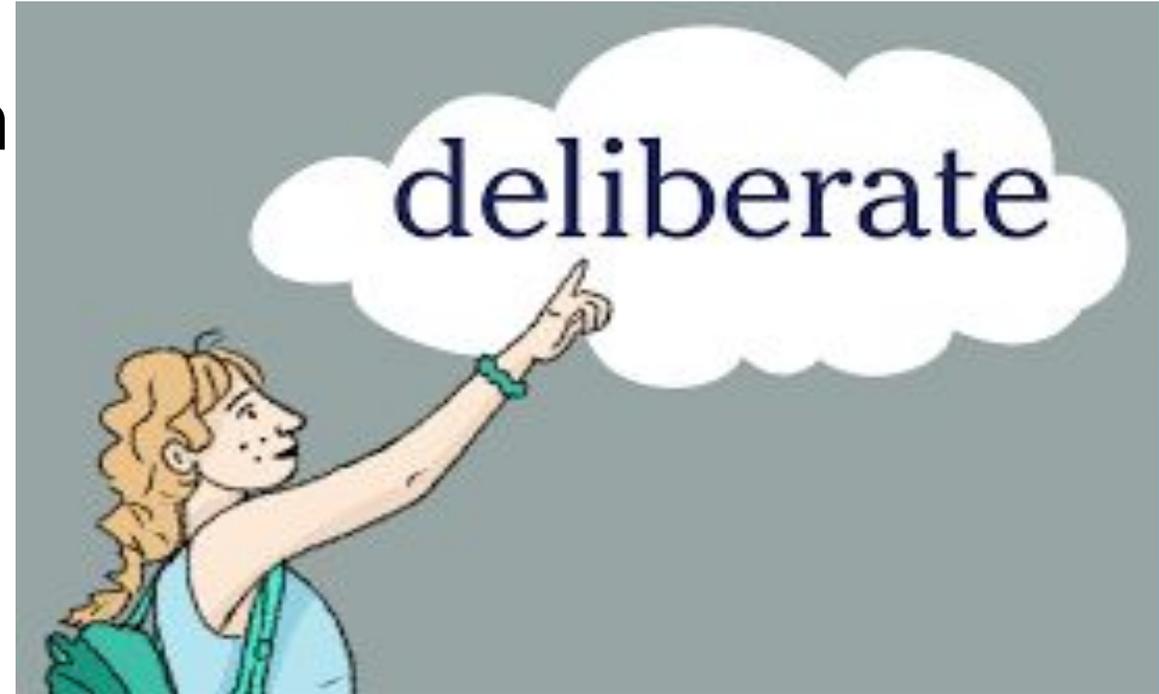
Be Deliberate

- Our outreach /marketing should have purpose
- Reflect on the “why am we doing this?”
- Market research data should drive your outreach/marketing decisions



Be Deliberate

- Builds loyalty and trust with your users
- Helps solidify and maintain community
- Be mindful of your competition (Generative AI, Google, Amazon, YouTube)



Respond to Change



- Libraries are always in a state of change
- As long as we use the library, we will always be in a state of disruption and flux
- We must continuously reassess our work, mission, vision, and purpose

Advocate

- Library staff and the web site are the first touchpoints
- Library staff are the “face” of the library
- Be mindful of how we promote
- Be intentional in our roles as “library cheerleaders”
- What words do we use in our 45 second elevator speech?



Concluding Remarks

- Intentional Outreach is being deliberate in the planning, promotions, behavior, and messaging in your marketing/outreach activities
- Relationship building is a slower process, but more important than service transactions
- Conduct market research to learn about your community
- Create tailored messages to your different user groups



Concluding Remarks

- Engagement is more authentic than traditional communications
- Don't make assumptions- marketing and outreach should be informed by data
- Empathy and compassion are powerful for libraries and library workers
- Advocate- library cheerleaders are needed to maintain funding, relevance, and gain more support



Questions





Thank you for inviting me!

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