Ten years in search of marketing excellence!

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Abstract

Purpose – The IFLA International Marketing Award was brought out in 2002 to libraries to employ marketing and bring out better results and identify the best marketing practices the world over. Now, the award has become a success story and through this paper efforts have been put up to showcase the award before library and information professionals around the world.

Design/methodology/approach – The primary data relating to award applications received each year have been collected and used to analyse and interpret in a meaningful way.

Findings – The IFLA International Marketing Award was introduced in 2001 and was awarded for the first time in 2002. Since then, this award recognises the first, second and third runner-ups each year based on the marketing project in all kinds of libraries, worldwide. The award has attracted 276 applications from 55 countries during the last ten years. The paper analyses the award applications chronologically, geographically and by type of library. It also discusses the winning libraries and their marketing activities. It concludes that the award has become a success story and is expected to reach two new countries each year and 750 libraries from 75 countries in the next ten years.

Originality/value – The paper will be useful for library and information professionals to understand the value of marketing being practised around the world and will encourage them to employ a better marketing approach in the libraries.

Keywords IFLA Award, IFLA International Marketing Award, Library marketing, Excellence in marketing, Best practices in library marketing, Library and information services marketing, Customer-based marketing, Libraries, Marketing

Paper type Case study

Introduction

The need for successful marketing practices in libraries throughout the world is evident in the literature. While it is agreed that there is no single best way to market library and information services, it is acknowledged that some are marketing ideas better than others and it is beneficial to the profession to recognise best marketing practices. Various awards recognise excellence in LIS marketing; the widely acclaimed award is the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) International Marketing Award. The award is international in its scope and is open to all kinds of libraries and organizations. For the first time, applications for the award were invited in 2001 for announcing the winners of 2002, and such practices have been continued. Applications for the 11th award in 2013 was announced in October 2012 on the IFLANET with

15 January 2013 as the last date of submission of applications for the award. For standardising the marketing terminology and educating library and information professionals a glossary of marketing terms is annexed with the award application and key marketing terms included. The application is designed in a manner that library and information professionals can put up their efforts in marketing frameworks.

This annual international award was created to identify best marketing practices and to encourage others to take an interest in marketing. The award, through the voices of its many applicants, can best communicate the types of marketing activities that libraries successfully engage in, not only to colleagues around the world, but also to people who use libraries or may want to use libraries, or to those in charge of providing funds for library services. This award has completed its successful ten years by continuing to offer the opportunity for all types of libraries to showcase marketing campaigns and programs, rather than simple publicity efforts. In all, 276 libraries from 55 countries have participated in this award process during the last ten years. The present paper discusses the award, its history and geographical representation, and in brief about the marketing projects of winning libraries.

Review of literature

Savard (2006) describing the history of IFLA Management and Marketing Section, mentions that an:

> [...] interesting innovation offered from the Section was the IFLA-3M Marketing Award. John Berry, Member of the Standing Committee and also President of the American Library Association, created the idea of organizing this award and convince 3M to be main partner. Over the years, the Section gained a lot of expertise in organizing the competition. The Jury was formed with members from different areas of the world and also from the different linguistic communities to make sure the propositions could be evaluated in all the five IFLA languages.

The stories of the award have been covered in the literature in the past. Koontz (2003, 2004a, b, 2006a, b, 2007), the present Adviser and former Jury Member and Information Coordinator for the award, published a column in the "Customer-based marketing" in the *Marketing Library Services* journal (www.infotoday.com/mls/default.shtml), where she mentioned about the award and the award winners for different years, which popularised the award in the library community and offered an excellent documentation for the people who are interested in the history of the award, award winners and award proposals.

Koontz (2003), while mentioning the genesis of the award marked that:

> We felt that the award through the voices of its many applicants, could best communicate the type of marketing activities that libraries successful engage in, not only to colleagues around the world, but also to people who use libraries, those who may want to use libraries, or those in charge of providing funds for library services.

Koontz (2006a, b) recounts the background of the award and mentions that:

> [...] over the course of the award, the winning libraries all marketed in a systematic way. By telling their own stories, the people who apply for this IFLA/3M International Marketing Award provide insight into the colorful behind-the-scenes daily business of modern libraries. She describes about the winning marketing projects for the first four years.

Three of the first runners of the award during 2002-2005 describe themselves about their marketing activities in detail in their works (Mohammed, 2006; Lapsley, 2006; Sala, 2006). They shared their success stories, describing the ways that attracted the attention of the users and made some mark in the history of their libraries employing marketing.

Gupta *et al.* (2010) discuss the origin of the award, its yearly growth and geographical representation for the first eight years' winning projects with comments from winners. Gupta further mentions that:

> If we take stock today of 8 years' activities of the IFLA International Marketing Award, in that time we received 218 applications from 49 countries in 6 different languages (English, Spanish, Russian, French, German, Chinese and Arabic). No doubt, when the IFLA Section Management & Marketing decided in 2001 to create the award, it never dreamed it would be so successful. It was the right thing to do and is now a real success story.

In the forthcoming IFLA publication by Gupta *et al.* (2013), ten papers are to be published, taking a review of the winners to the individual winner, signifying the importance of the award. It was thought proper to bring an holistic view of the award by publication in the Emerald Journal which is the present sponsor of the award in order to give more visibility to the award itself which itself has become a success story in a short span to ten years.

Objectives of the study
The objectives of the study are as below:

- to trace the growth of the IFLA International Marketing Award chronologically and geographically;
- to know about the number of libraries country-wise in regard to participation of libraries for the first time and total number of applicant libraries;
- to find about winning libraries from different countries, and its relation with the award applications; and
- to know about the key marketing activities of the winning projects.

Methodology
Each year award applications are invited on the IFLANET and Emerald's webpage along with many IFLA Sectional newsletters, listservs, blogs, etc. to attract quality applications from different parts of the world. Apart from the raw data available on each year's applications various documents were consulted for preparing this paper including: IFLA Management and Marketing Newsletter, Minutes of the SC of Management and Marketing Section, press releases, articles published in journals; data were collected and tabulated in the Excel sheet to make them meaningful.

Announcement of the award is made on the IFLANET and the award ceremony takes place during the IFLA World Library and Information Congress, each year. It was not possible to highlight each year's winning projects in the paper but the tenth year's winning projects have been highlighted in the paper.

Analysis and discussion
Year wise distribution of award applications
To recognise those libraries that develop and implement effective marketing programs, the Management and Marketing Section of the IFLA and 3M Library Systems joined

in 2001 to create the IFLA/3M International Marketing Award which sponsored the award for the first three years during 2002-2004. The award could not be announced in absence of the sponsor in 2005. SyrsiDynix collaborated as sponsor for the next three years during 2006-2008 and thereafter Emerald Group Publishing Ltd has been sponsoring the award since award year 2009. The award has attracted 278 applications from 57 countries during the last ten years. A year-wise distribution of the award applications has been shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that the number of applications received for the award fluctuated each year. In the first year (2002) the number of applications was 37, close to the number of applications at the tenth year (2012). The number of applications was lowest in 2003 and highest in 2004. The award attracted 25 applications from Russia alone, which made the number of applicants so high in spite of applicants from fewer countries in 2004. In four years (2007-2010), the variation in terms of number of applications was minimal.

Geographical distribution of applicant libraries
There are many local and national awards which are providing encouragement to libraries for employing marketing practices. The IFLA International Marketing Award is international in its scope which is quite evident from its name, and has been recognised world over. The award has attracted applications from 55 countries in all during the last ten years. The applications received from number of countries year-wise has been shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that the number of libraries from participating countries varies year to year; it was in 2012 when libraries from highest number of countries participated in the award application process. In 2003, the number was the minimum.

Number of countries participating vis-à-vis *number of applications*
The number of applications from number of countries varies each year. Figure 3 shows the libraries from number of countries participating *vis-à-vis* number of applications.

Figure 1.
A year-wise distribution of the award applications
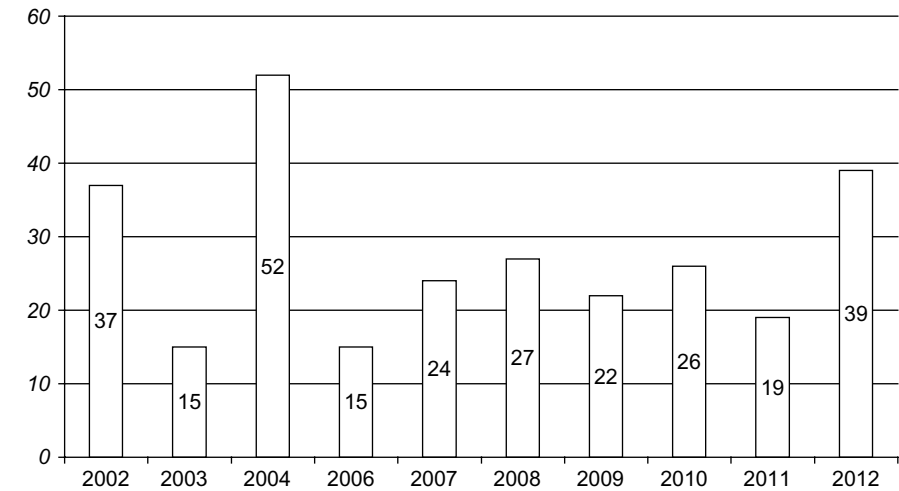
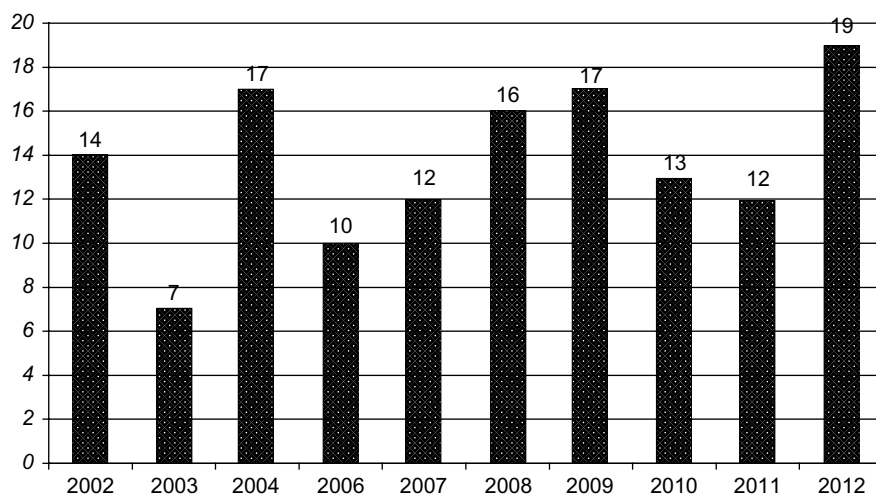**Note:** No award attributed in the year 2005

Figure 2.
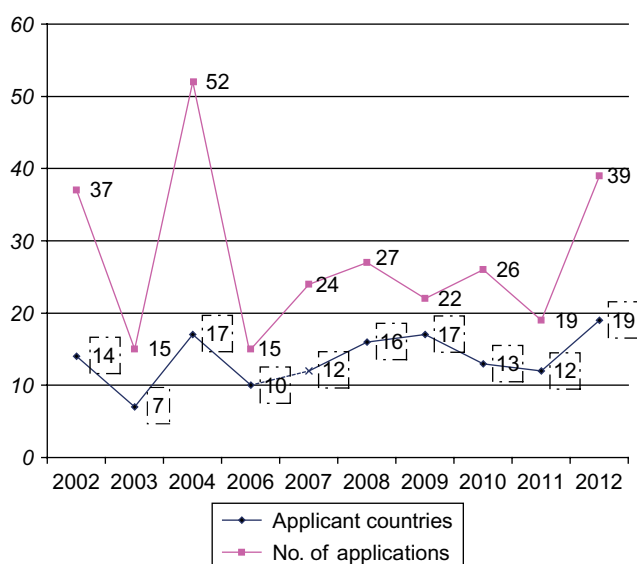Applicant libraries from
number of countries,
year-wise

Figure 3.
Libraries from number of
countries participating
vis-à-vis number of
applications, year-wise

Figure 3 shows some positive relationship between the total number of applications and the number of countries participating in the application process. The figure also reveals that in the first year 37 applications were received from 14 countries. The highest number of applications received was in the year 2004: 52 from ten countries; 25 applications received from one country led to the high number in this year.

In the year 2012, the number of applications received was the second highest. However, this year libraries from the highest number of countries (19) participated in the application process, whereas in 2003, only 15 applications were received from only seven countries. The number of applications continued increasing both in terms

of the number of applicants and number of countries during 2006-2008: in 2006 15 from ten countries, in 2007 24 from 12 countries, and in 2008 27 from 16 countries. Though the number of applicants came down in the year 2009 the number of countries continued to increase. This shows that it continued to reach a wide range of target libraries and information professionals world-wide.

Libraries country-wise participating first time

Each year, libraries from more and more countries started participating in the award contest. The number of applications country-wise received for the first time from various countries has been demonstrated in Table I.

Table I depicts that in 2004 libraries from maximum number of countries entered into the award contest for the first time. Contrarily, in the years 2008, 2009 and 2011, it remained minimum of two countries each year.

Number of participating libraries from different countries

The number of libraries from countries participating in the award process changes year to year. When looking at the number of application in regard to number of times of participation of libraries from different countries during the last ten years (Table II).

Table II depicts that libraries from 23 countries applied once in ten years, whereas libraries from the USA applied each year for the award. The number of libraries participating geographically (number of countries and libraries from the countries participating first time, each year) is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 shows that in all libraries from 55 countries participated during the last ten years. In the first year (2002) libraries from 14 countries participated in the award application process. The ratio of number of applicant countries *vis-á-vis* first-time participation from countries was highest in 2003 when libraries of five countries out of seven applied first time, whereas it was lowest in the year 2009 when libraries of two countries out of 17 were first-timers.

Number of applicant libraries country wise

Details of total number of applications from different countries were also drawn from the applicant libraries participating from the 55 countries. The number of applications and the name of countries is presented in Table III.

Table III again reveals that in all applicants from 55 countries participated during the last ten years. It was found that there were six countries with more than ten applications, namely, Russia, Canada, Australia, the USA, Spain and India. These six countries have share of more than half (54.3 percent) of total applications.

Applicant libraries category-wise

Any library can apply for the award, whether public, academic, school or special library. Even library consortia, associations, or organizations may also apply. Figure 5 demonstrates the number of applications according to type of libraries, year-wise.

Figure 5 shows that during the ten years, the number of applications from public libraries remained highest (119 – about 44 percent), followed by academic libraries (82 – about 30 percent). The category "other libraries" covers the rest (64 – about 23 percent). The smallest group of libraries were school libraries (ten – just 3 percent).

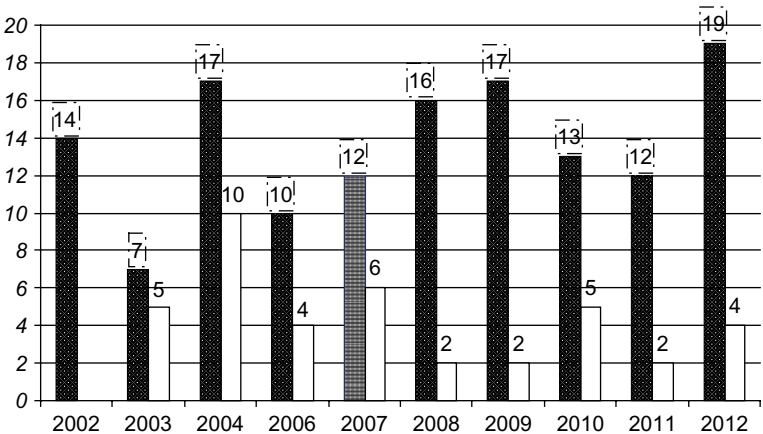| Year	2002	2003	2004	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. of applications	14	5	10	4	6	2	2	5	2	4
Countries	Canada, USA, Spain, Argentina, Columbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Germany, Congo, Poland, Kenya, Brazil, Benin	India, UK, Serbia, Tanzania, Thailand	Russia, Australia, Philippines, Nigeria, New Zealand, Ivory Coast, Chile, Indonesia, Cuba, Sweden	The Netherlands, Mexico, Senegal, Belgium	Singapore, Portugal, Peru, Finland, Croatia, Estonia	South Africa, Burundi	Jamaica, France, Sri Lanka	China, Lithuania, S. Korea, Switzerland, Norway	Indonesia, Germany	Trinidad and Tobago Ukraine, Iran Zimbabwe

Table I.
First time participation of
libraries country-wise

No. of times participation of country libraries	No. of countries	Name of countries
Only once in ten years	23	Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Croatia, Estonia, France, Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Maldives, Mexico, The Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, Zimbabwe
Two times in ten years	15	Belgium, Congo, Cuba, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, New Zealand, Nigeria, Portugal, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, S. Korea
Three times in ten years	7	Bulgaria, China, Chile, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Singapore, Tanzania
Four times in ten years	2	Columbia, Philippines
Five times in ten years	2	UK, Argentina
Six times in ten years	2	Australia, Russia
Seven times in ten years	2	India, Spain
Nine times in ten years	1	Canada
Every year	1	USA
Total	55	

Table II.
Participating libraries
from different countries

Figure 4.
First time participation of
libraries country-wise

The runners-up from different countries

First, second, and third prizes were presented during the press conference of the IFLA World Library and Information Summit each year at different locations around the world, these include: Glasgow, 2002; Berlin, 2003; Buenos Aires, 2004; Oslo, 2005; Seoul, 2006; Durban, 2007; Quebec City, 2008; Milan, 2009; Stockholm, 2010; San Juan, 2011 and Helsinki in 2012. The winning projects along with type of library is presented in Table IV.

Table IV reveals that over the past ten years, the first, second and third place winners came from 13 public libraries (National library, Branch Libraries, Municipal Library, library consortia included), ten academic libraries including three school libraries, one research library and three special libraries. Thus, above 40 percent of the winners belong to public libraries only. The first place award went five times to public libraries and

No. of applications	No. of countries	Name of countries
1	21	Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Croatia, Estonia, France, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Maldives, Mexico, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, Zimbabwe
2	13	Belgium, Congo, Cuba, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Ivory Coast, Peru, Portugal, Senegal, South Africa, S. Korea
3	6	Bulgaria, Chile, New Zealand, Nigeria, Romania, Tanzania
4	1	Lithuania
5	2	Serbia and The Netherlands
6	2	Argentina, Philippines
7	1	Singapore
8	1	UK
9	2	Argentina, China
12	1	India
18	1	Spain
23	1	USA
26	1	Australia
32	1	Canada
39	1	Russia
Total	55	

Table III.
No. of applications
and the countries

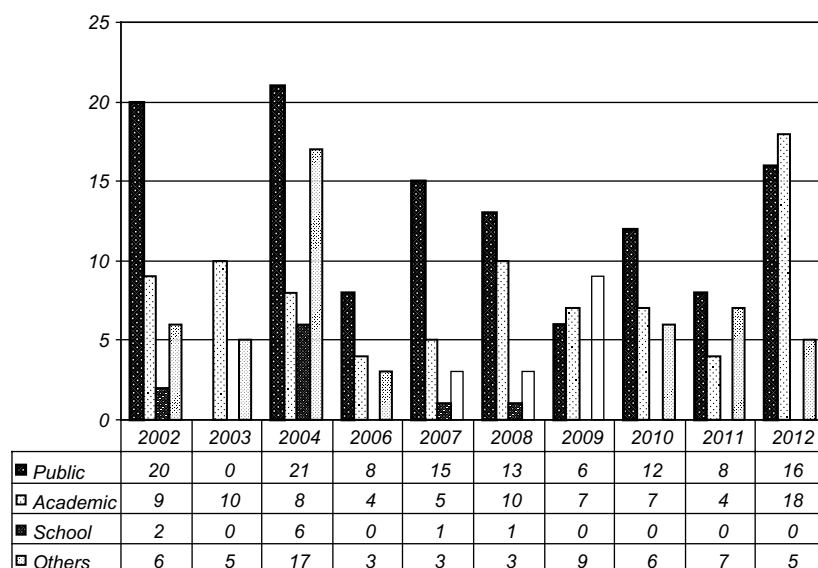|	2002	2003	2004	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Public	20	0	21	8	15	13	6	12	8	16
Academic	9	10	8	4	5	10	7	7	4	18
School	2	0	6	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Others	6	5	17	3	3	3	9	6	7	5

Figure 5.
Type of applicant libraries

twice to school libraries, twice to an academic library and once to a special library. It is to note that in 2002, 2006 and 2009 all three runner ups (first, second and third place winners) were public libraries whereas in 2004, no public library was runner up. Libraries from Australia (school libraries) won the first place twice. There were two

Year	Runner ups	Name of library	Type of library
2002	First	Houston Public Library	Public library (USA)
	Second	Calgary Public Library	Public library (Canada)
	Third	Flushing Library	Branch library (USA)
2003	First	Consorci de Biblioteques	Public library consortia (Spain)
	Second	Chulalongkom Univ. Lib.	Academic library (Thailand)
	Third	Newman College of Hr. Ed.	Academic library (UK)
2004	First	School, Australian Islamic College	School library (Australia)
	Second	Krasheninnikov Regional Research	Research library (Russia)
	Third	African Rice Centre	Special library (Ivory Coast)
2006	First	Public Library of Spijkenisse	Public library (The Netherlands)
	Second	Public Library of Quebec	Public library (Canada)
	Third	Reg. Lib. Ser. of Castilla-la-Mancha	Public library (Spain)
2007	First	Tartu University Library	Academic library (Estonia)
	Second	Zadar Public Library	School library (Croatia)
	Third	Biblioteca Comunal de Santa Cruz	Municipal library (Peru)
2008	First	Central West Libraries	School library (Australia)
	Second	Richmond Public Library	Public library (Canada)
	Third	Calgary Public Library	Public library (Canada)
2009	First	National Library Board	National library (Singapore)
	Second	Wrexham County Borough Council	Branch library (UK)
	Third	Alberta Library, Edmonton	Public library (Canada)
2010	First	Learning Resource Centre, Indian School of Business	Academic library (India)
	Second	Gail Borden Public Library District, Elgin	Public library (USA)
	Third	University of Bergen Library	Academic library (Norway)
2011	First	German National Library of Medicine	Special library (Germany)
	Second	Edmonton Public Library	Public library (Canada)
	Third	Georgia Institute of Technology Library	Special library (USA)
2012	First	Tsinghua University Library	Academic library (China)
	Second	The University of Waterloo Library	Academic library (Canada)
	Third	Kosteneevo Rural Library	Public library (Russia)

Table IV.
Winning projects *vis-á-vis* type of library

instances when two places went to the same country, in 2002 and 2008, the USA and Canada, respectively. Two runner-up libraries were from the same countries in the same year, belonging to the USA and Canada in 2002 and 2008, respectively.

Key marketing ideas
It has taken many decades to straighten out the difference in meaning of marketing, though there are more definitions of marketing in marketing texts, now. So there is no universally accepted concept of library marketing though a large amount of literature on this theme proves the interest of library professionals and importance of marketing for libraries. Now marketing is not an add-on activity for libraries but marketing is practiced and is inherent in libraries and every librarian is involved in it in some way or the other. But, as illustrated by the applicants for this award, it can be said that libraries are now embracing true marketing. Over the course of the award, the winning libraries all marketed in a systematic way. By telling their own stories, the people who

apply for this IFLA International Marketing Award provide insight into the colorful behind-the-scenes daily business of modern libraries. The key marketing idea of each of the runner ups is presented Table V.

Table V reveals that marketing abounds to ideas and creativity. In each winning library marketing project, library professionals have shown their eagerness to participate in the community work, branding and rebranding services, targeting special groups, promoting resources, attracting users and non-users, designing newer products, promotional campaigns for enhancing use of resources and services, serving special categories of users, outreach activities, educating users through newer media, behavioral change and so on. But these are ideas which any library can work upon and which symbolise that marketing is an essential ingredient to library services in whatever fashion they can performed well.

Award for 2012

The following marketing projects were chosen for awarding first, second and third place for the year 2012.

First place. For branding and educating was awarded to Tsinghua University Library, Beijing, China, represented by Yang Yi, Deputy Director, and Han Lifeng and Wang Yuan, Reference Librarians. The project team, composed of professional librarians and students, created a low-cost series of five short, entertaining videos that feature two undergraduates who meet in the library. Their interactions not only tell the humorous, light and warm story of "Falling in Love with the Library" but also improve library brand awareness and library literacy and thus help students, especially freshmen, make optimal use of library services and fully benefit from them. The videos are offered in two versions, one with Chinese and one with English subtitles. A web-based book-shelf matching game is also offered. The first-place winner receives airfare, lodging, and registration for the 2012 IFLA General Conference and Assembly to be held this year in Helsinki, Finland, and a cash award of $1,000 (USA) to further the marketing efforts of the library.

Second place. For visual identity was awarded to the University of Waterloo Library, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, represented by Nancy Collins, Communications and Liaison Librarian, and Esther Millar, Coordinator, Library Communications and Web Management. The library launched a buttons campaign featuring 13 creative button designs to capture the visual identity of the six library locations available to students, faculty and staff. The buttons were also used on bookmarks, posters, brochures, Facebook and library signage as an eye-catching branding device. The library distributed over 23,000 buttons, which quickly became collector's items during the campaign.

Third place. For increased use of resources was awarded to the Kosteneevo Rural Library, Yelabuga District, Republic of Tatarstan, Russia for the project "The Whole Village Reads", represented by Guzjal Erkaeva. The project began with a book festival, followed by a year-long calendar of programs, competitions, and other activities geared to diverse audiences, from children to elderly men. The goal was to raise interest in the library and make it the "informational, intellectual, and spiritual center" of the small rural village with 558 inhabitants. The program received excellent press coverage and resulted in greatly increased use of the library and recognition of the librarian from the Tatarstan government.

The award is well respected in professional circles which is evident in the e-mail from the winner of 2012 received on 5 November 2012 as below:

Year	Runner ups	Marketing project	Key marketing activities
2002	First	Power card challenge	Increase in the number children accessing libraries by branding
	Second	Rediscover your Calgary Library	Use of television advertising to increase awareness about the library
	Third	Flushing Library	Awareness campaign about resources
2003	First	Consorci de Biblioteques	Participation in a outreach activity and make your presence
	Second	Chulalongkom Univ. Lib.	Enhancing use of e-resources
	Third	Newman College of Hr. Ed.	Enhance awareness about the library
2004	First	School, Australian Islamic College	Participating in learning activity is part of marketing
	Second	Krasheninnikov Regional Research	Targeting special group for services
	Third	African Rice Centre	Serving special clientele with special service
2006	First	Public Library of Spijkenisse	Attracting non-user patrons who were using the library previously by campaign "we miss you"
	Second	Public Library of Quebec	Promotion by using special library material
	Third	Reg. Lib. Ser. of Castilla-la-Mancha	Marketing through socialising
2007	First	Tartu University Library	Planning new services for students and parents
	Second	Zadar Public Library	Target marketing by bookmobile services to larger community
	Third	Biblioteca Comunal de Santa Cruz	Targeting a group by pushing book-filled grocery carts into local markets
2008	First	Central West Libraries	Helping online in completing the home work for the students
	Second	Richmond Public Library	Heightening awareness of library resources to students and families not familiar with public library service
	Third	Calgary Public Library	Using of the library as a community gathering space
2009	First	Go Library	Multi-platform project aiming at outreach entice customers
	Second	Happy days/take a fresh look at your library	Repositioning the library in the community
	Third	Alberta Campaign/Books and beyond	Promotion of online resources
2010	First	Learning Resource Centre, Indian School of Business	New product line to keep users update and use the library more frequently
	Second	Gail Borden Public Library District, Elgin	Peer group marketing through video developed by the users
	Third	University of Bergen Library	Online video promotion to motivate students to re-ignite interest and place value in their library
2011	First	German National Library of Medicine	Behavioural change through integrated communication channels
	Second	Edmonton Public Library	Rebranding and engaging library stakeholders

Table V.
Winning projects *vis-á-vis* type of library

(*continued*)

Year	Runner ups	Marketing project	Key marketing activities
	Third	Georgia Institute of Technology Library	Radio campaign to spread library awareness
2012	First	Tsinghua University Library	Branding the library and educating the users through video
	Second	The University of Waterloo Library	Visual identity through buttons
	Third	Kosteneevo Rural Library	Increase use of resources by targeting user population

Table V.

How are you doing? I just email you to share some news about the promotion video. In order to celebrate the 100 anniversary of Tsinghua University Library, we created two micro videos cooperating with students, one is from the view of an undergraduate and the other is postgraduate. Students and colleagues love them very much.

They are available at www.lib.tsinghua.edu.cn/dra/news/annoucement/3279 and www.v. youku.com/v_show/id_XNDY3MTc5MTAw.html

www.v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDY3MTc4Mzg0.html

The video "Falling in love with the library" and the news that it won IFLA marketing award really improve the China library community's interest in promotion video. The Peking University Library,which is also one of the top universities in China, just made their video to celebrate the 110 years birthday. It's a microfilm.

www.v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDcwODU0NDY0.html Have a look and compare it with our play, which one do you prefer?

Just two hours ago, Ingrid Parent, IFLA president visited our library and we took photos with her again. In August, we met her in Finland. It's really great to share our progress with the President. We hope you could come to see our library in the near future. We'll see if any chance.

Future perspectives
The award has educated many library and information professionals, recognised efforts by excellent library marketing practices and has brought wide experience of library marketing at the forefront of library community world wide. The wide range of applications proves the increasing interest of librarians and their eagerness to put excellent marketing efforts in their services. The award itself has become a success story by now when it completes ten years. It is foreseen that in the next ten years the application process will be better and it is estimated that in next ten years at least two new countries will participate in the award application process and libraries from 75 countries would have applied by 2022. In term of number of applications, it will reach the total of 500 in next ten years and double from 750 by 2022 thereby on an average of 10 applications from 75 countries. When new history of the award is written in 2022, it will bring out many new facets of marketing libraries in this changing world.

On such move it has been decided to announce three runners-up and seven highly commendable marketing projects, thereby announcing top ten applications which will boost applicants' confidence in the award. It is also planned that from 2014 the award

applications are invited online in order to simplify award application and judging process. Such small efforts would enhance visibility of the award itself in the years to come.

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