

Advertising on Library Websites: Comparing library websites in Europe and the USA

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Although libraries have traditionally been outside of the world of commercial advertising, the current rise in information value, demand and cost creates the possibility for information providers to use Internet advertising on library websites. However, even in a society where the need for advertising is taken for granted, some still question whether libraries and information centers should use it. This article provides an overview of the use of advertising on library websites in Europe and the U.S. Using data collected from a survey of 243 library websites done in 2003, the article discusses the current amount of advertising and the use of self-and com-

mercial advertising on these websites. It also compares the differences between types of libraries and between geographic areas. The major finding of the study is that libraries in Europe and the U.S. both use self- and commercial advertising on their websites; however, libraries tend to use self-advertising more frequently. Further study found that libraries use all popular types of advertising – banners, links, Web pages, information lines – to promote the most predictable types of products on their websites – books, articles, conferences, exhibitions, new services, and databases. The article concludes with suggestions for further research.

Introduction

Advertising is pervasive and ubiquitous in modern society. Appealing to all our senses, it is in every area of human activity. Newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, Internet, mailboxes, public transportation, and other areas of life overflow with advertising, and still advertisers continue to search for new ways of spreading their messages to new audiences.

Advertising on library Web pages has become a focus of attention, mostly because of libraries' mission to provide information. However, even in a society where advertising and its important function in commerce are taken for granted, some still question whether libraries and information centers should use Internet advertising; and if they do, what kind and how much advertising would be morally or ethically appropriate without damaging the quality of their users' information gathering processes and without violating their users' right for unbiased information?

As the Internet has become more frequently used to advertise companies and organizations and their products and services, there have been several general articles written on Internet advertising. Wells (1997), Eveleth (1998), Parsonis (2000), Quint (2001), Rusteika (2001), and Neciuliene (2001) briefly analyzed Internet advertising. Kaye and Medoff (2001) as well as Valavicius, Tamosaityte and Naslaitene (2000) summarized Internet advertising history, marketing, types, placement, audience, agencies and design. Yoon and Kim (2001) analyzed the effectiveness of Internet advertising, its effects on sales of products and services, its similarities and differences with traditional advertising, and how the concept [1] of a product/service affects the effectiveness of Internet advertising. Goldsmith and Lafferty (2002) did a survey of consumers' responses to websites and their influence on advertising effectiveness. Others like Mulcahy (2003) analyzed how Internet advertising clutter [2] affects users. Gumuliauskas (2003) summarized current knowledge

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about banners and ways their use is expanding. Talijunas (2001, 2003) described the cost of Internet advertising. Legal Internet issues were discussed by Akdeniz, Walker and Wall. (2000).

Very little has been published about advertising on library websites. There was one early attempt documented by Eveleth (1998), when Germany submitted a proposal to the European Union Parliament, to describe and standardize the use of Internet advertising on library websites. Moxley, Blake, and Maze's (2004) article is a recent attempt to evaluate Internet advertising and libraries. They discussed what effect Internet advertising on commercial search engines (Google and AltaVista) had on their users, their trust and information gathering processes. In the article they expressed concern that libraries might lose the trust of their audiences if they start using advertising on their websites.

This study was designed to focus specifically on the use of Internet advertising, the amount of advertising, the type, the method of advertising, and the products advertised on library websites. The goal of this study is to create a general understanding of Internet advertising on library websites and to help establish some standards for the use of Internet advertising on library websites. It examined six hypotheses:

1. The amount of advertising on the libraries' websites is not large;
2. Libraries use both self- and commercial advertising on their websites; however, their use of self-advertising is more frequent;
3. Special libraries use advertising, especially commercial advertising, on their websites more often than national or public libraries;
4. Libraries tend to use all popular methods of Internet advertising;
5. Products and services advertised are the same in all libraries;
6. Advertising is more often used on U.S. than on European library websites.

Definition of terms

The article discusses two types of advertising: self-advertising and commercial advertising.

The term self-advertising is often replaced with the term self-promotion. These two terms are often

understood as synonyms, although self-promotion is generally considered a broader term. In this article the term self-advertising is used instead of self-promotion to mean the type of advertising employed when a company or organization promotes itself and its products/services through a media channel that belongs to the company or organization. For example, when a library places advertising about new services on its own or its organization's website.

In this article self-advertising is defined as something that is a visible, message that attracts attention. During the survey, advertising was categorized by the method of advertising (banner, link, webpage and information line) that contained the message. The informational content of a message becomes advertising when it is placed in a format appropriate to advertising and given special emphasis. For example, a message about a change in library opening hours is advertising if it is placed on the library website using a banner or pop-up instead of simply replacing the original opening hours with new information. The Center for Economics and Business Information of the School of Economics and Business Administration, Helsinki, Finland, used a banner to advertise books' renewal via mobile phone and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden, had a separate website to promote current articles and new books written by the faculty and the students of the university.

In general, commercial advertising is 1. a message paid for by a company or other sponsor for broadcast on radio and TV stations; 2. the part of publicity that contains a brand name or other message, akin to the paid broadcast commercial of the sponsor; 3. of or connected with commerce or trade; 4. made, done or operating primarily for profit (Weiner 1990). However, during the survey it was not possible to identify from looking at the websites whether a specific message had been paid for. For this reason, commercial advertising in this survey was defined as advertising on websites that promoted organizations, products, services, publications and events that were not part of the library itself or part of the organizations that the library belonged to. For example, medical and health care products' advertising was found on the website of Gustave L. and Janet W. Levy Library, Mount Sinai School of Medicine; Tomkins-McCaw Library, Virginia Commonwealth

University; and University of Arkansas Medical Science Library; and the Jenkins Law Library, Pennsylvania contained advertising on its website for new books for sale from the Library's vendors.

A summarized list of products advertised on all surveyed library websites using self- or commercial advertising is presented in the Results section below. Because this research was an attempt to check if advertising on library websites exists, there was no follow-up done on the specific companies that placed advertising on the library websites.

Methodology

The data for this study was gathered from a survey of Internet advertising on special, national and public library websites. The libraries for the survey were selected from specific portals compiled by libraries or other organizations that provide alphabetical lists of particular types of libraries by choosing every third library from the specific list. For example, Thomas J. Long Business and Economic Library, University of California, Berkeley created a list of Academic Business Libraries in North and Central America, Europe and Asia-Pacific; Washburn School of Law created the Washlaw Web that lists all Law Library Catalogs in the U.S.; or the University of Queensland, Australia, which created the Cybrary website of National Library Catalogues Worldwide.

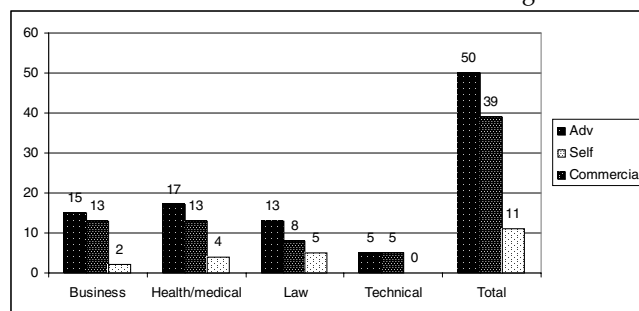
First, a detailed preliminary survey that focused only on special libraries asked whether or not Internet advertising appeared on these libraries' websites. During the preliminary survey, 192 special libraries were analyzed by dividing them into business, medical, law, technical and "other" groups. The results of the preliminary survey showed enough websites used advertising [3] (30%) to warrant further research.

A second, broader survey (Švenčionytė 2003) analyzed a total of 243 libraries' Web pages. This number included 154 special (37 business, 52 medical or health, 44 law and 21 technical libraries), 39 national and 50 public libraries in Europe and in the United States. For this second study, the category "other" (miscellaneous special libraries that did not fit into any of the major types) was excluded.

Table 1. Amount of advertising on special library websites

Library types	Websites surveyed	Websites with Internet advertising	Percentage (%)
Business	37	15	40.5
Health/Medical	52	17	29.5
Law	44	13	29.5
Technical	21	5	21.5
Total	154	50	32.5

Table 2. Advertising types on special library websites: difference between self- and commercial advertising use.



Results

Two classification systems were used to present survey results. In the first classification, the sample libraries were divided and then compared by the type of library: special, national, and public. In the second classification, the sample libraries were divided and then compared by geographical region: Europe and the U.S.

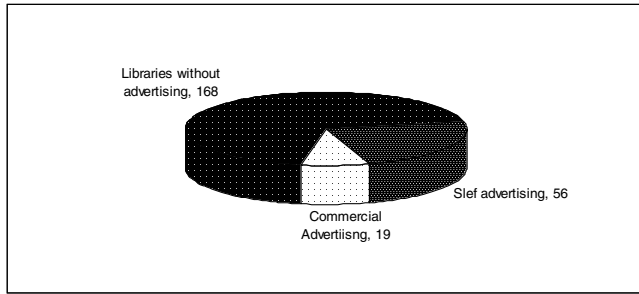
Type of library

Special libraries

Fifty examples (32.5 percent) of Internet advertising were found. As seen in Table 1, this overall percentage was not the same in all types of special libraries. The highest percentage of Internet advertising was found in business libraries, and the lowest percentage of Internet advertising was found in technical libraries.

This Internet advertising divides into two unequal parts by the type of advertising: self-and commercial advertising. As seen in Table 2, self-advertising is used more often on special library websites than is commercial advertising. From a total of 50 Internet advertising examples, 39 were self-advertising and 11 were commercial advertising. Table 2 shows how frequently the use of commercial advertising varies greatly with the

Table 3. Amount of advertising: self- and commercial on library websites



type of special library. Commercial advertising was the most common in law libraries and in health/medical libraries.

National libraries

Thirteen (33.3%) examples of Internet advertising were found, of which nine were self advertising and four were commercial advertising.

Public libraries

Twelve examples (24%) of Internet advertising were found, of which eight were self-advertising and four were commercial advertising.

As Table 3 shows, the survey results for all types of libraries are quite similar. For example, two-thirds of the all Internet advertising examples are self-advertising, while only one-third is commercial advertising.

The survey also revealed that products advertised on all surveyed library websites are the same. Those products are:

- related organizations (other libraries, universities, co-operating organizations, funds and other),
- library catalogs (related subject catalogs; for example, law libraries),
- databases (scientific articles, papers and other),
- library services (modernizing libraries' circulation process),
- new services (article scanning and emailing),
- conferences inside and outside libraries (management, engineering and other),
- exhibitions (watercolors, illustrated books for children, ex-libris and other),
- events (breakfasts in the library, night readings and other),

Table 4. Internet advertising by advertising method

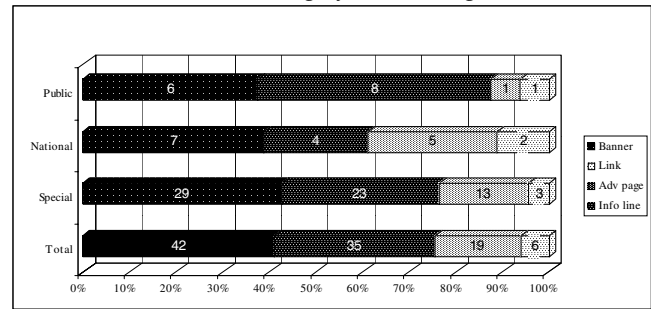


Table 5. Amount of Advertising on European Library Websites

Library types	Websites surveyed	Websites with Internet advertising	Percentage (%)
Special	42	9	21.4
National	38	13	34.2
Public	25	5	20
Total	105	27	25.7

- books (new books in the library, new published books),
- articles (full text articles, articles by subject, articles by university and other),
- lectures (English language, citizenship, computer programs and other).

In addition, as shown in Table 4, all of these libraries use the same methods of advertising as Web pages, i.e., banners, links, and information lines. Banners and links are the most popular method of advertising on all websites. Information lines and Web pages are not so common on library websites.

Geographic differences

Europe

As shown in Table 5, Internet advertising in Europe is most common on national library websites (34.2%). Nine (69.2%) of these examples were self- and four (30.8%) were commercial advertising. In general, special and public libraries do not use as much advertising as national libraries. In fact, during the survey no commercial advertising examples were found on European special libraries websites.

Table 6. Amount of advertising in special library websites

Library types	Websites surveyed	Websites with Internet advertising	Percentage (%)
Special	112	39	34.8
National	1	0	0
Public	25	7	28
Total	138	46	33.3

Table 7. Europe and the U.S.: Type of Internet advertising

Library types	Total # of Advertising Examples	Self-advertising	Commercial Advertising
European Special	9	34%	0%
U.S. Special	39	57%	28%
European National	13	33%	15%
U.S. National	1	0%	0%
European Public	5	11%	7%
U.S. Public	7	11%	4%

U.S.

As shown in Table 6, Internet advertising in the U.S. is most commonly found on special library websites. On 112 special library websites, 39 (34.8%) examples of Internet advertising were found. 26 (66.6%) of these examples were self- and 13 (33.3%) were commercial advertising.

The results shown in Table 7 indicate that commercial advertising does not occur on special library websites in Europe; however, in the U.S., commercial advertising is used in one third of special libraries. An analysis of public libraries shows similar results for both geographic areas (see Table 7).

Discussion

From the data gathered, it is clear that libraries in Europe and the U.S. both use Internet advertising on their websites. The survey found examples of Internet advertising on 75 out of 243 sites, or in 30.9 percent of the library websites. According to the ebiz.lt [4] (2005) website for comprehensive information resources for the new economy, summaries of Internet advertising surveys done by "Jupiter Research" (Great Britain), "Burst Media" (U.S.) and "Advertising Research Foundation"

(U.S.) show that the use of Internet advertising is growing. The results of these surveys indicate the possibilities in the future for Internet advertising growth on libraries websites. Results of the current study of Internet advertising use on library websites shows that different libraries already use Internet advertising effectively.

Libraries use both self- and commercial advertising; however, libraries tend to use self-advertising more frequently. Although libraries are moving towards a more business-oriented organization style and using more marketing strategies, the use of Internet advertising, especially commercial advertising, may be limited for two reasons. First, libraries use little Internet advertising, both self- and commercial, because as information disseminators they protect the users' right to high quality information that is free of advertising. As mentioned previously, Moxley *et al.* (2004) expressed their concern about the use of Internet advertising on library websites. They state that by using Internet advertising on their websites, libraries can lose the trust of their users as has happened with the Internet search engines whose "results are inescapably influenced by marketing and advertising" (Moxley 2004, 62). In addition, they state that library work is based on the nature of a shared public good. For this reason, "one does not expect the library to be funded by commercialism such as receiving a kickback from the Chilton publishing company every time one of their manuals is used to assist a patron change the oil in their car" (Moxley 2004, 62). This point of view probably stops many librarians from effectively using Internet advertising, especially commercial advertising. However, other points of view expressed in current articles support the idea of using Internet advertising to promote the value of the library (Tompson 2003; Strand 2004). One way that libraries can make the library and its services more visible and known to the users is to self-advertise the library.

Second, most libraries use little or no commercial advertising because most of the companies do not consider library websites to be effective and frequently used information resources. Commercial advertising relies on volume to be cost-effective. For this reason, few companies are interested in cooperation with libraries or in placing their advertisements on library websites. Nevertheless, if libraries would agree on and clearly

state their policies regarding Internet advertising use, there would almost certainly be an increase in the number of companies willing to promote themselves on library websites. One recent study of Internet effectiveness (Goldsmith and Lafferty 2002) shows that Internet advertising is effective in increasing library users' attitudes-toward-the-site and the library's services/products, logos/brands, and image. In addition, Schlosser *et al.* (1999) found that people generally trusted commercial advertisements placed on websites more than self-advertisement by the library itself (Schlosser 1999, 319).

Although there could be an increase in the use of advertising on library websites in the future, the survey results suggest that there will probably be more self- than commercial advertising examples on library websites. Out of a total of 75 Internet advertising examples, 56 (74.6%) presented self-advertising and only 19 (25.4%) presented commercial advertising (see Table 3). As was stated above, by using self-advertising on their websites, libraries increase their value by making themselves and their services more visible. The most common examples of self-advertising are promoting different branches of the library, work hours, exhibitions/conferences, job positions, new services, books/periodicals and/or databases.

Although libraries currently use more self- than commercial advertising, it appeared logical to assume that because of the specific purpose and audience of the special libraries, they would also have more Internet advertising, especially commercial advertising examples, on their websites than national or public libraries do. However, the results of the survey showed that in general special libraries and national libraries have the same amount of Internet advertising on their websites, approximately 33 percent. Nevertheless, in the U.S. special libraries have more advertising examples (34.8%) than national or public libraries while in Europe there were more Internet advertising examples found on national library websites (34.2%) than on special or public library websites.

Summarizing survey results from Table 7 shows the controversy in the use of Internet advertising by different types of libraries in the different regions. For example, 34 percent of special libraries in Europe use self-advertising, but they do not use commercial advertising. Internet advertising is used in almost twice as many special libraries (39)

in the U.S. In addition, U.S. special libraries use a great deal of commercial advertising (28%) on their websites. In contrast, public libraries both in Europe and the U.S. use approximately the same amount of self-advertising, and their commercial advertising differs only slightly (7% and 4%).

National libraries in Europe and national libraries in the U.S. view Internet advertising from very different perspectives. National libraries are seen as representatives of all libraries in the country. For this reason, more organizations in Europe are willing to cooperate with these libraries and place ads on their websites rather than on the websites of special libraries. In addition, national libraries also represent the main example of how libraries in general pursue Internet advertising in the country.

Special libraries differ more from the other two types of libraries because many of these libraries do not receive governmental funding. Usually, they follow different policies for advertising on their websites. In addition, the obvious field of specialization of the library and its users makes special library websites a better environment for the use of commercial advertising. As was mentioned above, this situation is more common in the U.S. than in Europe. For these reasons, a comparison of the results of self- and commercial advertising use on library websites indicates that different libraries, different types of libraries, and/or libraries from different geographic regions view Internet advertising, and especially commercial advertising, use differently.

Further data show that libraries use all popular types of advertising (banners, links, Web pages, information lines). As Table 3 shows, most advertisements found during this survey were banners. This finding is not surprising because banners are currently the most commonly used method of Internet advertising (Gumuliauskas 2002). The most creative and interesting examples of banners were found in special libraries of the U.S., especially business and law libraries.

Advertising links are the second most frequently used method on the library websites. Links are not as popular a method of advertising as banners because they lack text space for informative description on the advertised product/service or because they are not as eye-catching as banners. However, links are often used by the libraries because they save Web page space and are usually

not as noticeable by the general population of users. Although this tactic appears controversial, it supports a theory of cognitive psychology that states that people only notice advertising if it is related to their current needs. In addition, using links saves libraries from the need to deal with complaints caused by the advertisement.

Next, as can be seen from Table 4, Web page and pop-up advertising is even less common than banner or link advertising because users are not as tolerant of this form of advertising on library websites (Rettie 2001). Nevertheless, Web pages and especially pop-ups are extremely effective if used for a short period of time to advertise current events and sudden changes in the library environment (conferences, exhibitions, change of work hours, cancelling database/journal subscriptions, etc.) (Solutions of Interactive Communication in English 2003). Although libraries often forget to use information lines as one of their Internet advertising methods (see Table 3), such lines are effective as a method of self-advertising to promote the library and create a better image. For example, they can be used to greet users (Public Relations), inform them of the library work hours and their changes (information advertising), briefly present coming conferences and events, direct users to more informative sources (event advertising and directive advertising), and others.

Books, articles, conferences, exhibitions, new services and databases are the most common products and services to be advertised on library websites. There were no main differences among the types of libraries or between the geographical regions in this area. Ninety percent of all surveyed Internet advertising belongs to one of these categories. This finding supports that products and services advertised on library websites are stable (advertising for books, scientific articles, scientific, cultural, and cognitive events). Libraries usually do not promote leisure or entertainment venues (bars, night clubs) or events on their websites. However, on the website of the University of Southern California library (U.S.) an advertising page of a library sponsor, Anderson Company, was found. On the website of the National Library of Estonia (Europe) advertisements for the National Theater and the Drama Theater were found. On the website of the Atlanta Public Library (U.S.), a banner for downloading a tax form was found. And on the website of Vanderbilt

University's Walker Management Library (U.S.) a banner for a trade center was found. This finding demonstrates that, although it is still uncommon, it is possible for libraries to use more non-library related advertising. Nevertheless, before using non-library related advertising on their websites, libraries should consider the proper fields of commerce or entertainment that could be advertised and that would not interfere with library policies or ethics. For example, it might be considered unethical to advertise nightclubs, bars or casinos on library websites, but it might be completely proper and useful to place advertisements of other organizations that work in cultural, educational, and recreational areas. There are other interesting areas for consideration that may present their own special considerations, e.g. religious organization advertising.

Conclusions and directions for future research

Advertising poses new and difficult challenges related to its use on library websites. Considering the current growth of Internet and Internet advertising use, libraries will have to consider the possibility of using more advertising, both self- and commercial, on their websites.

This study is a first attempt to look at the libraries as Internet advertising space providers (commercial advertising) and as special brands of information disseminators (self-advertising). The study provides many interesting findings; however, it has some basic limitations. First, because this was the first study of its kind, the methodology was created during the study. And although a preliminary study was conducted, it did not eliminate all mistakes from the main survey. Second, the comparison between two geographical regions was added after the data had already been collected. For this reason, the comparison is brief and makes several points that cannot be fully supported by the collected data. One additional survey should be made to check the current situation of Internet advertising on library websites and Internet advertising differences in those two geographic regions. Comparison of these surveys should be made to gain information about the changes.

Additionally, it would be useful to survey the approach of the librarians and the response of library users to the advertising on the library web-

sites, to check how effective advertising on libraries websites is, how many advertisements and what kind can be placed on a website without disturbing the information search and retrieval of the user, how advertising on library websites affects this process and also what the effect censorship of advertising on library websites might be.

Notes

1. The "concept" of a product/service is what the product represents or the idea behind it.
2. Advertising clutter or advertising noise is the confusion caused by the presence of many advertisements using the same media.
3. During this survey 30 percents of special libraries that had advertising on their website were found.
4. See <http://www.ebiz.lt> (Comprehensive information resources for new economy).

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Editorial history:

paper received 27 April 2005;

final version received 22 September 2005;

accepted 6 October 2005.