

## Enhancing Outreach, Marketing, and Engagement Through Empathic Design

### Introduction

I'm so grateful to ASERL for inviting me to speak about something very close to my heart – empathy – and for enhancing library outreach, marketing, and engagement through empathic design, a user-centered approach that integrates emotional and psychological insights into the design process.

Let's explore how empathy can transform how we design outreach, engage with our users, and market libraries. The agenda includes:

- Defining Empathy
- Introduction to Empathic Design
- Empathic Design Process
- The FIRST Values Framework

### What Inspired Me to Write the Book

#### *Empathy by Design: Empathy-Driven Marketing for Libraries*

##### ***Over a Decade of Librarian Experience***

- I witnessed the evolving needs of diverse library communities.
- Realized traditional marketing lacked emotional connection.

##### ***Identifying Gaps in Communication***

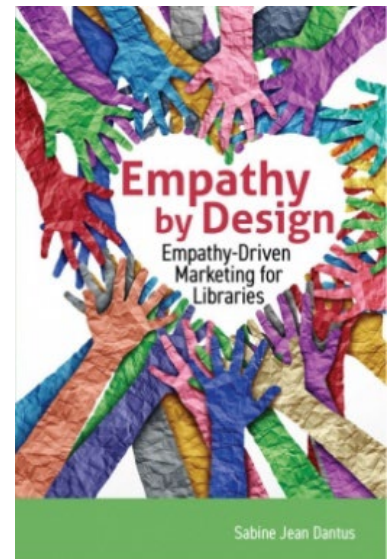
- Users, especially underserved groups, struggled with access and connection.
- Traditional marketing focuses too much on promoting services, which needs more empathy.

##### ***Desire for Inclusive and Empathic Marketing***

- I wanted marketing that goes beyond information and creates genuine connections.
- Focused on ensuring users felt understood, valued, and supported.

##### ***Empowering Myself to Use Empathy as a Tool***

- I wanted a tool for fostering trust and meaningful relationships in my work.



- I wanted to create welcoming, inclusive spaces that reflect users' emotional experiences.

### ***The Birth of the FIRST Values Framework***

- Developed to align library outreach with user needs through empathy.
- Fellow-feeling, Identification, Responsiveness, Self-awareness, and Thoughtfulness.

## **Defining Empathy**

Let's start by defining empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of other people. It involves seeing the world through another person's eyes and responding compassionately. In library settings, this means putting ourselves in the user's shoes to understand their challenges, emotions, and needs.

## **Empathy in Marketing**

- Personalization
- Customer Service
- Listening
- Showing Appreciation
- Storytelling

## **Empathy in Library Marketing**

Empathy is essential for improving user experiences in academic, public, or school libraries. It helps us understand users' challenges and create valuable and emotionally resonant marketing and outreach. For instance, in a library setting, empathy in marketing could mean personalizing the user experience, providing exceptional customer service, actively listening to user feedback, showing appreciation for user contributions, and using storytelling to connect with users on an emotional level.

Effective library marketing starts with understanding user needs. Empathy marketing can enhance traditional outreach – this focuses on meeting users' emotional needs, addressing library anxiety, and creating a sense of belonging. Relationship marketing also plays a key role, emphasizing building long-term trust and commitment. Both approaches allow us to engage our users more deeply and form lasting connections. User engagement is crucial for promoting library services.

Digital platforms and social media enable us to share content that emotionally resonates with our users. Creating user-focused content can foster stronger relationships and increase interaction. Empathy also plays a significant role in co-

creation and service design. When you collaborate directly with users, we can create value, ensuring our marketing and outreach meet their needs.

Empathy helps us understand users' emotional states and design services that reflect these needs.

### **Here are the goals of empathy in library marketing:**

- User needs & feelings
- Solution-based
- Consistent messaging

### **Empathic Design in Libraries**

Empathic design is a user-centric approach that integrates emotional and psychological insights into the design process. It's a testament to our commitment to meeting our communities' diverse emotional and practical needs.

### ***Why is empathic design important?***

1. It improves user satisfaction by addressing emotional needs.
2. It enhances communication by making users feel heard and understood.
3. It fosters loyalty through trust and long-term relationships.
4. It supports diversity by recognizing and addressing different cultural and emotional needs.

### **Benefits of Empathic Design**

Empathic design transforms how libraries serve their communities.

- **Increased User Satisfaction & Engagement:** Users feel their needs are understood, leading to higher engagement.
- **Stronger Community Ties and Loyalty:** Libraries can build long-lasting relationships by focusing on emotional connections.

### **Considerations Using Empathic Design**

While empathic design has many benefits, there are challenges:

- **Risk of Bias:** Designers must be careful not to project their emotions onto users.
- **Time-Consuming:** The process of observation and data collection can be resource-intensive.
- **Emotional Labor:** Engaging deeply with users' challenges can lead to emotional fatigue for staff.

## The Empathic Design Process

The empathic design process typically follows these five steps:

1. Observation: Directly observe users in their environment.
2. Capturing Data: Collect insights from interviews, surveys, or focus groups.
3. Reflection and Interpretation: Analyze the data to understand user needs.
4. Brainstorming Solutions: Develop ideas based on users' emotional needs.
5. Prototyping and Testing: Test new services or systems to gather feedback.

## Application of the FIRST Values Framework

The FIRST Values Framework integrates empathy into marketing and services with five core values – Fellow-feeling, Identification, Responsiveness, Self-awareness, and Thoughtfulness. Fellow-feeling fosters empathy and shared experiences with users. Identification focuses on understanding user demographics and motivations. Responsiveness emphasizes proactive communication and feedback. Self-awareness encourages libraries to reflect on their strengths and limitations. Thoughtfulness considers the broader impact of marketing efforts on stakeholders.

## Conclusion

To conclude, empathic design allows libraries to connect deeply with users by understanding their emotional needs and challenges. By observing user behavior, gathering insights, and implementing solutions that resonate emotionally, libraries can enhance satisfaction, loyalty, and engagement.

The FIRST Values Framework developed in my book exemplifies how empathy can be systematically applied to marketing and outreach, creating more personalized, user-centered marketing that meets the needs of diverse communities.

Thank you! I look forward to your questions and discussions on how we can continue to use empathy to enhance library outreach, marketing, and engagement.

*Feel free to contact me.*

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## Further Reading

Dantus, S. J. (2024). *Empathy by design: empathy-driven marketing for libraries*. ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) Publishing.  
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