

## **MARKETING OF INFORMATION CHANGES AND CHALLENGES IN LIBRARIES**

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### **Abstract**

Marketing approach is very useful to university libraries to improve their image and to attract more users. The librarians in the university libraries can play a significant role in catering to the needs of different groups of the academic community -students, teachers and research scholars –for furthering their educational research. They are more responsive to their user's needs and wants and more effectively achieve the library goals and objectives. They are not fully exploiting the comparative advantages that they possess in comparison to private sector information agencies. Rising prices of reading material, information explosion, introduction of new information technology, shrinking funds, devaluation of money, declining support to libraries have made it necessary for the university libraries to reconsider their position and to utilize some of the tools that have made it possible for profit organizations to operate efficiently, effectively and profitably.

**Keywords: Marketing of Information, Library Marketing, Marketing Challenge.**

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## 1. Introduction

Libraries are facing serious competition from commercial information services providers which essentially use the resources available from libraries and analyze and repackage the same for customized use by the clients and online resources are emerging in a big way that will question the role and form of libraries in future.<sup>1</sup> In the competitive information environment, information is being recognized as a critical resource for socio-economic development. Scientific and technical information growth is exponential and the users are confused with the right information at the right time. Thus libraries have been putting considerable efforts in the design of information products and services in distributing the same effectively and efficiently. In view of the social, economic and technological changes, library and information centers have begun to realize that marketing of information products and services is an integral part of administration. On account of information explosion, the technological revolution and escalating library costs are responsible for encouraging the library profession to develop a professional marketing approach in its operations and services.

## 2. Marketing

The literature on marketing does not provide a single definition of the concept due to the difference in background and perspectives of the authors, ranging from business to information. The word „marketing” in the Oxford English Dictionary<sup>2</sup> reveals that usage of the term can be traced back to 1561 when it meant simply, to buy or sell”. The American Marketing Association<sup>3</sup> (AMA) defined marketing as the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services to the customer. Kotler<sup>4</sup> the marketing guru, calls marketing a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and exchanging products of value with others.” He further adds “marketing is the analysis, planning and controlling of the firms customer imagining, resources, policies and activities with a view to satisfying the need and want of chosen customer groups at a profit.” He summarized the marketing concept holds that the key to achieving organizational goals consists in determining the need and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors. The four key elements of marketing concept are target market, satisfying needs and wants, coordinate marketing, and organizational goals.

Marketing is the process by which products are made available to the ultimate customers from their point of origin. It consists of all those activities which are meant to ensure the flow of

goods and services from the producer to the customer. The modern concept of marketing is a social approach which is customer oriented. It makes customer the focus of all business activities. It laid emphasis of the customer satisfaction. The modern concept of marketing is one which starts with an interpretation of consumer's needs and desires.

## **2.1 Marketing of information changes and challenges**

Marketing of information is one of the stages of information management. It involves promoting the information products and services by adopting marketing strategies effectively. The most important objective of marketing information is to attract more number of users and to encourage them to utilize the resources of the library to the maximum extent. Many of business sector organizations have achieved success through a better management of the market. There are four essential factors identified in a successful marketing oriented organization.

Focus on customers

Long-run perspective

Full use of all the resources available

Tendency to innovations

In terms of libraries, marketing means a sufficient change in the traditional attitude of librarians towards acquisition, organization, processing and retrieving information. The basis of library service should be to help its users to solve their information gathering and processing needs. The libraries can do this only if it relies on systematic information collection, procedures and policies and adjusts its products, services and organizational policies and procedures to the demands of

the users. Also the modern concept of library, is user oriented which makes user the focus of all activities. At the pragmatic level, there are two types of barrier which might hinder the recognition that libraries need to adopt the marketing concept .

In general libraries offer a service and not a good. Services marketing have been recognized as a separate field which has developed more recently than product marketing. A service is an intangible product involving a deed, a performance, or an effort that cannot be physically

processed. Focus on the quality of the service experience and the relationship with the customer in developing a service marketing strategy.

The winds of globalization, marketization, and privatization have been sweeping away the long-held political and economic beliefs. Governments and social sponsors have been propagating that social institutions like hospitals, schools, colleges, and libraries become self sufficient if they are to purposefully work and demonstrate their relevance and competence to their clients. As a result, librarians and information managers are facing a four pronged challenge.

Librarians and information managers are, therefore, called upon to show their initiative and entrepreneurship. The concept of marketing libraries is not new. Gupta<sup>5</sup> points out that public libraries were the first to embrace the concept of marketing, with the main thrust in the 1980s aiming at the four Ps – product, price, place and promotion– and academic libraries were the leaders in marketing their services. In the next decade, libraries continued to emphasize traditional marketing strategies such as recruiting new customers, but also began to understand the importance of satisfying patrons’ needs. According to him the concept of marketing libraries is based on the following assumptions:

Libraries have long been non-profit organizations; the development of marketing libraries was influenced by Kotler and Levy’s<sup>6</sup> theories about marketing for non-profit organizations;

Libraries are involved in service operations. Because services are different from products, service marketing is different from product marketing;

Libraries must establish relationships with users, suppliers, governments, parent organizations and so forth; they have to satisfy all stakeholders, not only the users;

Libraries are not the sole providers of information and must be competitive; and

The Internet allows libraries to offer services anytime, anywhere and to anyone.

Marketing is beneficial to libraries because an effective marketing programme can help the library to create competitive advantage through the development of new services or changes of the existing ones to satisfy their users better; improvement of their organizational status and image to different stakeholders; and there by improve their performance in general.

## **2.2 Marketing of information in the university libraries**

The marketing of information in the university libraries happens to be a recent phenomenon. In India, the universities are being funded by the UGC and state governments. This may be the reason that the information providers in the university libraries are not seriously thinking in terms of marketing their products and services. The university libraries until now depended upon common sense standards for the acquiring of information and disseminating of the same to the users. Their efforts in this direction can at best be described as casual or immature. The result is that information services provided by the libraries have not proved very beneficial to the scholars. The libraries have failed to provide the required information support to the users because the services provided by them are often not user-oriented or need based. The reason for this sad state of affairs is that users are not involved in the design of services and they are not made aware of the potentialities of information services and how these services can benefit them in their pursuits. The result is that whatever services are available, remain either unutilized or underutilized. However, this state of affairs can be activated by adopting suitable marketing strategy.

One of the tools which is appropriate is marketing their products and services. No doubt, marketing helps the librarians to upgrade their reputation within their organizations and as a profession within the society.

Many librarians have their view that marketing products and services is not possible in academic libraries. Kotler <sup>7</sup> is of the view that marketing is not limited to large corporations seeking profits only. It is equally applicable to non-profit organizations as well as colleges, universities, charitable institutions, libraries, information centres and service organizations of all kinds.

## **3. Market and potential market of a university library**

Library and information products and services are now being recognized as commodities that can be sold, exchanged, lent, and transmitted. University libraries rely on their host organizations for operational costs. To gain some self sufficiency, university libraries think seriously about not only recovering the costs incurred but also making a profit through their services. Information marketing by university libraries in India is essential in order to:

Promote the use of information resources;

Create perception of need and there by create demand;

Ensure the optimum use of information;  
Improve the image and status of the libraries and library professionals;  
Tackle the problems of rising costs of reading materials, journals, and databases;  
Cope with the information explosion;  
Introduce cutting-edge information technology system in library services;  
Balance shrinking funds;  
Save libraries from declining reader-support; and  
Uphold the dictum that information is power.  
The market of the university library consists of various segments;

Academic staff members, who engage in teaching of various subject disciplines, conduct research, and maintain scholarly projects to develop their respective profession. Non-academic staff and other people such as researchers, professionals and general public outside the university; Needs, wants and demand of the library are centered on academic and educational requirements such as bibliographic information, textbooks, full text in digital formats, reference and reading space, information consultancy, and facilities for learning environment;

Tools and facilities for entertainment, leisure and social activities;  
Information required for day to day life, know-how technology, and community information;  
Strengths and opportunities of university libraries;  
Availability of resources collections covering various disciplines practiced in the university;  
Availability of professional staff with expertise in different subject areas and the paraprofessional staff to help with the dissemination of desired information;  
Possibility of obtaining funds under comprehensive project proposals;  
Infrastructure facilities and links with expertise; and Information skills of the staff.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The marketing of information has been a popular topic in the library profession in recent years. But at the same time there has been much controversy regarding the concept of marketing in the library and information services profession. There is still much resistance in the library and information services field to the use of 'marketing' approach to management. The information product and services are like customer product and services in many respects. But there is reluctance on the part of librarians to employ marketing principles in libraries. Marketing as a concept and as a practice, still seems alien to many library and information

personnel. Within the profession, there is a residual feeling that marketing is somehow inappropriate for a public service institution such as library. Some librarians still hold this view and see no room for such practice in a not-for-profit profession like librarianship. Now it is high time to change our attitude. Marketing of information means transference of information to the potential user/customer.

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