

## Marketing of Information Products and Services in Library and Information Centers: A Conceptual Framework

\*Shweta Pandey

\*Research Scholar, Department of Library and Information Science, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India; Email: pandey.shweta7@gmail.com

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### *Abstract*

*The chapter presents a holistic view of Marketing Management in Libraries and unfolds the role of Marketing and its application in libraries and information centres. The chapter also presents a conceptual framework of and discuss various tools of marketing in digital age.*

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**Keywords:** Marketing, Information Products, Information Services, Library Services.

### **1. Introduction**

Information plays an important role and have been recognized as key resource of social and economic development. The present age is rightly christened as the age of information. The fact that information is a key resource for the economic, socio-cultural and political development of a nation is gaining increasing acceptance. Henceforth, availability of right information at right time and at right cost becomes all the more critical. It means that Information professionals will have to chip in, accept the challenge and make it happen by playing a more pro-active role. Information, like other commodities, is also priced, produced, packaged, re packaged labelled, and supplied. It is being used by those involved in decision making for problem solving varying only from user to user on need basis. Libraries are not merely ware houses of books, it provide proactive services to their users both from the library stock as well as a wide range of external sources. Increasing demand and development in ICT, advances in technology, and telecommunications over the last decade or so have enabled librarians and information professionals to provide access to, and offer effective and in proactive advice on the information well beyond the bounds of the library's own book stock.

In an increasingly competitive world, Library and Information Services have realised that they too must promote and publicise the services and products they offer. As Morgan (1998, p. 50) points out, "There are many people and institutions providing information services today than even five years ago .We have to exert more to improve our services and convince people that they should use libraries instead of other information providers."(Morgan,1998)<sup>1</sup>

Marketing is a management discipline that provides the focus for successful organisations which needs to be effectively practiced within the organisation (De Sáez, 2002)<sup>2</sup>.

For an effective management and applications of marketing in context to information and service department there is a requirement of clear understanding of user's needs- their understanding, thereby matching with best products, services and relevant information, formulating the strategies, planning, and implementing in proper way to achieve user satisfaction level.

Traditionally Library is a non-profit organisation and only recently such organisations have become aware of the need to market their products and services. Library and information products and services (LIPS) are now being recognised as saleable and having a growing market for it.

Librarians and information professionals are therefore, switching over to marketing concepts and techniques to ensure the development and expansion of these services. Most of the services offered by Library and Information Services can be marketed successfully.

## **2. Marketing Management in Libraries and Information Centers**

History of library marketing began in late 19th century when libraries (particularly public libraries) started to think about users in the form of extended opening hours to extend library facilities to users beyond normal working hours.

In 1960, however, the concept of marketing changed forever with the publication of (Levitt, 2004)<sup>3</sup> classic article entitled "Marketing Myopia". In it he challenged the traditional product-oriented approach to marketing, and with it, the notion that a good salesman could sell anything to anybody'. Instead, he argued that the key to an organization's success is putting the customers' needs first. In other words, adopting a customer-oriented rather than a product-oriented concept of marketing.

Its root deepened further when librarians in the USA started to establish 'personal relations with the users' Public librarians started to advertise in 1896, felt concerned for managing their libraries in 1896, outreach in 1903 and extension work in 1908.

Samuel Swett Green advocated marketing the library through reference services in his article, "Personal Relations between Librarians and Readers" (Green, 1876)<sup>4</sup> which appeared in 1876 in the American Library Journal (later known simply as Library Journal). By 1920s, the library movement started in many countries. Many national and international professional associations (including IFLA, 1927) came into existence during this period and their contributions improved overall situation of libraries and librarianship world over.

Green also spread his message through the American Library Association (ALA) conferences and meetings. Somewhat later, portable libraries were introduced in the Light-House Establishment and these served to all light vessels and inaccessible offshore light stations in an attempt to meet out the reading needs of the community residing at distant locations. The books were carefully selected from a list of books of good quality appropriate to the families who would use them.<sup>5</sup>

Bachubire claims that whereas in the marketing of "tangible" commodities the ultimate goal is to sell, in the marketing of information services emphasis is paid to fulfilling the needs of the clients/users of information products or services" (Bachubire, 1991)<sup>6</sup>.

Walters states that, "For libraries, our customers are not only the people who come to us seeking information, books, and materials; they are also individuals and organizations who have a stake in our organization. These stakeholders are the elected officials who control city budgets and our funding base, civic and neighbourhood associations, and a wide variety of special interest groups" (Walters, 1992)<sup>7</sup>

Introducing marketing to the domain of information has not been easy. One of the reasons for the traditional resistance on the part of librarians and information professionals to adopt the marketing concept is the misconception that it means manipulating and coercing customers into buying things, a concept that they, understandably, considered inapplicable to the domain of information.

As a result, many librarians and documentarists do not see a need for "marketing" their services. That is why (Amaral, 1992)<sup>8</sup> claims that introducing or adopting marketing techniques to libraries "involves modifying traditional activities, developing strategies for change and preparing these organizations for future trends.

Melvil Dewey and others advocated for travelling libraries which were small rotating collections that provided a means for extending library service to rural areas. These small libraries (usually from 30 to a 100 books) were located in a post office or store with a volunteer acting as the caretaker of the collection.<sup>9</sup>

Such initiatives also took place in other countries (India, Canada, France, etc.) which can be considered as concrete marketing efforts. The concept of marketing for non-profit organisations was introduced in 1969 by Kotler and Levy and was used for non-profit making purposes but libraries in early times were reluctant to use it. Now with changing times, the concept has become very popular and is extensively practiced by the libraries not only in foreign countries but in India too. The marketing and public relations are galvanising the libraries to work for improving its services, in terms of quality as much as in forms of delivery, in order to convince users to use them, instead of turning to alternative information providers.

Many library and information services deal with internal customers. In order to offer an effective service to customers, it is important to identify the benefits sought by different groups or segments and to understand the consumer decision-making process which is important in determining purchase in behavior and the use of the services. There were diverse views offered on the concept of marketing. Much of the confusion arises as marketing concept has evolved from selling concept to product development to customer oriented. Gupta, D.K (2003)<sup>10</sup> gave broad view on four aspects of Marketing:

a. *Marketing as a set of techniques*: It is a tool kit; a set of practical techniques and proven processes which can be applied to all aspects of the service planning, service delivery and service evaluation. Effective service planning begins with market research; analysis of needs and preferences of the user community. Effective service delivery requires market awareness; a carefully planned strategy of promotional activity. Effective service evaluation needs to start with the market response; the views of users (and non-users) about service performance.

b. *Marketing as a philosophy*: The premise of marketing is simple and appealing as "the user or customer is the beginning and end of every library activity". The satisfaction of a customer is primary concern of marketing and the entire ethos and shared values of the library owe the responsibility of satisfying the customer. Everyone in the library, from top to bottom has a role to play in rendering optimum satisfaction to the customer. As such the attitude of service providers becomes important.

c. *Marketing as an approach*: In libraries, marketing does not require the creation of a separate department and the appointment of a person to look after this department, but marketing is every one's function from top management to the front liners, it is a total

organizational effort. Inter-functional coordination and cross-cultural perspective becomes important in order to remove communication barriers, work in teams and empower the work force.

d. *Customer-driven marketing*: The role of marketing is more than finding customers for the available information sources, services and technologies. Among others, marketing forms a partnership with the user who becomes the central part of the total service efforts. It requires an in-depth understanding, greater intimacy and mutual trust among library and its users. This comes through enhancing the benefits to users in relations to the cost.

Ranganathan's famous Five Laws of Library Science (Ranganathan, 1931)<sup>11</sup> was published in 1931. The Five laws have been discussed in the light of marketing by many authors. Interestingly, these laws can be said to be relatively well aligned to marketing theory, (Gupta & Savard)<sup>12</sup>. From these laws logical corollaries are derived that can directly be related to marketing. Table 1.0 presents a view of five laws and marketing implications.

**Table 1.0: Five laws and marketing implications**

<b>The Law</b>	<b>Actions to be taken</b>	<b>Marketing implications</b>
Books are for use	Optimum use of resources, Facilities and services	Acquiring appropriate information material and ensuring sufficient resources and services are available for the use of users. Convenient location, effective signage and longer opening hours; helping hands for using resources and services.
Every reader his/her book information	Meeting users need Satisfactorily	Collecting and interpreting, understanding the needs of users and matching with the organizational resources.
Every book his/her reader promotional	Reaching out to users	Publicizing value and benefits, campaign, advocacy, public relations, personal communication, etc.
Save the time of user	User benefits	Repackaging information into form, availability of information when needed. Ensuring quality of services and offerings preferences.
Library is a growing organism	Adapting to future user needs	Mobilizing resources, dealing with uncertainty about future user needs, new services, new customer groups, new environment, etc.

Marketing in a library setting is more than presenting books in a nice arrangement, printing flyers, hosting an event but it is rather satisfying the ever changing users needs. It is important to note that librarians have different understandings of marketing which is obviously the reason for the variation in approach or strategy adopted by libraries for information services.

### **3. Marketing Practice in Technology Environment**

In the last four decades, computer technology and ICT has created a revolutionary change in various areas. Similarly, libraries and librarians need to remember that effective and relevant library services are driven by user needs, not by technological advances alone. Technology is changing the dominant form of recorded thought from print to electronic.

That change, in turn, is irrevocably altering the ways in which people create, find, and process information. Pathak, and Das, (2001)<sup>13</sup> accepted that the provision of electronic information to patrons is becoming a common feature of special libraries in the developed world.

The Web has also expanded the scope of services provided by librarians. The growing Internet usage among library users and potential users, plus the time these users spend on the Internet, has made it imperative that libraries offer their services online. Today's consumers of information have more alternative and attractive ways of finding information than using the traditional library (Sadeh, 2007)<sup>14</sup>.

Today a great number of the library's population of users and prospective users are actively accessing and creating online, digital, and networked information. Evidence of the library's active online or digital clients can be observed in the growing online social networks. In addition, the formation of communities of interest among Web users indicates a growing online social networks. In addition, it also indicates a growing movement toward Web collaboration. Farkas (2008)<sup>15</sup> suggests that the Web provides opportunities for libraries to collect the information that "resides in people's heads" and benefit from the library's "community of users" supplying "feedback and contributions".

There are number of important services and applications in the 2.0 world that address to library users' needs and desires, and it makes sense for libraries to experiment with these new capabilities so as to identify associated advances in library services. Yet these capabilities should be evaluated based on their ability to meet user needs and not adopted merely because they are cutting-edge technology.

Current and new forms of electronic information are fundamentally changing the way people produce, access, and process information. Members of the first generation of the technological revolution (those born after the proliferation of personal computing in the 1980s) have perceptions of information, its creation, its use, and its storage vastly different from the traditional views. Libraries and librarians are expected to partner with many types of institutions, organizations, and individual users to provide both traditional and cutting-edge services and flexible, usable physical and online environments. User participation and input will increasingly drive the adoption of technology, library services, and the design of physical and digital library spaces. Lankes writes, "Libraries have a great opportunity to provide invaluable conversational, participatory infrastructure to their communities online" and advance the library's position in both physical and digital communities (Lankes, Silverstein, & Nicholson, 2007)<sup>16</sup>. The continued popularity of and technological advances in social networks give libraries and users an opportunity to create online spaces that offer relevant library services and content in a way that caters to users' individual information-seeking behaviours.

Cole et al. (2010)<sup>17</sup> pithily summarized that marketing is imperative for libraries to be proactive and to meet users' needs. As the information environment becomes more competitive and cluttered, marketing can make a difference by helping connect libraries with their users. Blakeman and Brown (2010)<sup>18</sup> identified several benefits of using social media for marketing, branding and awareness, such as acquiring new customers, gathering feedback from customers or community, raising awareness of community efforts and connections, building community network, and fund raising.

### 3.1 Social media and Digital Marketing

Social media can be considered as an interesting information dissemination tool requiring only minimal effort which can be used by the library to promote reading and publicize its informational and cultural efforts. Social media can also be used as dynamic, provision of service and marketing resources with a clear reduction in costs compared to other more traditional types of advertising and publicizing. Opening a new channel of communication with users on the internet is a challenge for libraries that can be optimized with the development of a strategy for the use of social media. The library should make an effort to manage these resources efficiently and obtain maximum possible return on their use.

The financial cost and working hours for creating and maintaining a project on a social networking website involves is minimal, and in exchange, the benefits that can be harnessed, mainly in regard to the improvement of the image of our institution and our services, are enormous (Lloret Romero, 2011)<sup>19</sup>. Few tools, adopted by libraries are listed (table 2.0) which are providing the library with a space for dialog, a space to talk about books and culture and to share information and documents.

There are numerous different versions of the 4C's of social media but most of them include; Customers, Content, Context, Channel, Community, Conversations, Connections and Conversion. (Brenner, 2010)<sup>20</sup> and (Nelson, 2010)<sup>21</sup> and ("The Four C's," 2009)<sup>22</sup>. Some of these C's overlap with each other and are focused more on social media marketing. Different 4C'S of Social media and marketing are as below:

In context to marketing in libraries, it is relevant to, **Customers**: something that is missing from many social media plans is the focus on customers. Marketing is all about getting people to know libraries values based services and products that make them trust to visit again and access the services. **Content**: in building strong customer relationships, library has to put enormous to maintain a good relationship with their customers and make best possible effort to retain them, they should provide valuable information either in terms of customized products, services that meets their customer needs. In social media content is not necessarily about creating white papers or videos. It can include 140 character tweets, photos, brief product updates or FAQs. **Channel**-Depending on customers librar's primary focus should look back to study the Customer needs and make effort to understand where they spend their time, what Content would be helpful and in what **Context** do they expect to receive it. Then pick up the channels most relevant to them.

According to (McGillis and Toms, 2001, p. 355)<sup>23</sup>, library Websites compete with a host of other Internet services and organizations for clientele, they must capture and motivate the user; provide useful, innovative, and interactive services and products; give the library some form of identity; and encourage repeat visitation while holding the interest of users and simplifying their tasks.

Up till the late 1990s, the Internet landscape was heavily characterized by a static, one-dimensional nature. The term invented to describe this phenomenon was "Web 1.0". In Web 1.0, users could only view web pages but they were not able to interact dynamically with them. Content creators were few, with the vast majority of users simply acting as consumers of content. At first, users would simply read what others wrote, but over the time they decided to actively take part into creating the information they shared. This led to a new Internet era, commonly called "Web 2.0". The term Web 2.0 was coined by O'Reilly Media in 2004. Web 2.0 holds a fully dynamic, collaborative online environment. Users are not just passive recipients of information anymore but; they collect, evaluate and share

any kind of information they want with others all over the world. Most of the libraries are beginning to embrace web2 .0 as a way to enhance communication, information sharing, and collaboration, with their customers. The following table2.0summarizes the clustering of Web 2.0 applications in the five main categories:

Table: 2.0Web 2.0 applications

Category	Tools
Communication	Blogs, Micro-Blogging, Internet Forums/Messages Boards, Social Networking Sites-facebook, Google +, twitter etc.
Collaborations	Wikis, Social Bookmarking Delicious, Digg Social news, networking sites-LinkedIn, MySpacee, Ning
Multimedia and Entertainment	Photo Sharing, Video Sharing, Live Casting, Virtual World Sites
News and Information	News Broadcasting, Institutional Sites, Online Newspapers
Policy Making and Public Participation	Online contests or competitions, Wikis, Crowdsourcing, chats

Social media marketing enables librarians to achieve multiple objectives, but it must be made perfectly clear that to understand the return, it is necessary to work at different levels and each analysis requires a specific design as well as an analyst. Therefore, such analyses in non-profit institutions are required to be more comprehensive than other field. Social media, improving the image of the library and improving the users' experience. The first effect of the use of social media is an improvement in the "visibility of the library". There is a general feeling that despite being the municipal service most used daily, libraries do not have enough support and the librarians' work is both unknown and most certainly socially undervalued. The library's lack of visibility as an institution is an important issue because, on the other hand, it leads to lack of resources. The second effect of the use of social media in libraries, in marketing terms, is called "product improvement". Customer's comments and interactions in the blog and social networks can make libraries aware of which aspects of service can be improved. The feedback mechanisms is also one of the way by which library identify the gaps.

#### 4. Conclusions

Marketing is basically necessary in any type of libraries due to the sophisticated nature of the market, i.e. the users, services, products and the competition posed by other alternative source of information services. Marketing approach in digital environment has mainly consisted of market segmentation, marketing position, marketing mix and marketing audit. The next generation of marketing is in its infancy, the social web is already having an effect. The goal will remain the same to attract and retain customer but the modes are getting changed and upgraded. In digital environment and social media, content includes new ideas, research, and opinions. Collaboration creates an open environment in which people can, and do, share knowledge.

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