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## Marketing of Library Services in an Academic Environment

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DR. SUSAN MATHEW K.

### Introduction

Marketing of information services is now an important goal of librarians all over the world to attract more users to the library, thereby promoting user satisfaction. Marketing is considered as an integral part of libraries and information centres mainly due to the developments in information technology, information explosion, and declining library budgets. Kotler defines marketing as the “analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives”. Organizations such as museums, universities, libraries, and charities need to market their causes and their products to gain political and social support as well as economic support (Kotler, 1995). In the marketing world people are now migrating from the traditional Four P model to the SAVE model (Attenson, 2013). According to the SAVE model, marketing in an organisation must give priority to ‘Solutions’ instead of the features or functions of the ‘Product’. Similarly it is to focus on ‘Access’, instead of ‘Place’; ‘Value’ instead of ‘Price’ so that the benefits are more stressed, rather than production costs. Instead of ‘Promotion’, marketing has to concentrate on ‘Educating’ the customers, providing information about their specific requirements, instead of relying on advertising, public relations, direct selling etc. From a library point of view, to ensure maximum utilization of library services there is an increasing need for definite marketing plans to exploit the technological developments so as to entice the users. By anticipating their changing needs and by communicating with them it should be possible to devise strategies to present various library services and products in a perceptive style.

### Trends in Marketing Library Services

Libraries are perfectly placed as intermediaries on campus, connecting people with not only scholarly materials and resources, but also bringing them together for academic, social, creative, and cultural causes. Instead of being mere collectors of information academic libraries must strive to become facilitators of communication. It is the responsibility of an academic librarian to adapt to changing technologies in accordance with user’s perception of library services.

Though all library information is communicated via library websites or other communication media, printed materials can also be effectively displayed at main access points to attract user’s attention. Colourful posters, brochures, printed newsletters etc. help to bring forth updated information about library activities keeping the users informed about the changes in the library. Orientation programmes conducted for new students in the library premises or in respective departments at the beginning of semesters have to provide attractive information about library services and library materials to encourage more users to the library. Information literacy programmes will help the students to search databases, books and other information sources.

Library websites are important means of marketing library services. It can act as a portal introducing the users to new services and products. The searchable digital catalogue of library holdings (Online Public Access Catalog) acts as a useful tool to know about the relevant books and other materials required by the users. Interacting with students, faculty, and staff through blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and other social web tools help to understand their needs, problems, preferences, and suggestions. Social networking websites help libraries to reorganize their contents and present the library in a manner that is more approachable to the users. RSS technology is widely used by academic libraries to inform the users of latest library developments, new books, forthcoming events etc. Instant Messaging can be a useful tool for academic libraries, especially in the case of reference services. However, due to limited funds, technical issues, and staff problems it might be inefficient for some libraries (Radford and Kern, 2006). Weblogs are mainly used for posting new topics, for delivering library news etc. and some library blogs allow the readers to respond or post their comments. Podcasts are used to broadcast audio content, interviews with faculty, invited talks etc. In addition to all the above channels of communication, word of mouth is also a powerful way of marketing information. This can be formal, by way of teachers and professors advising the students about library usage or informal through friends opinion about library services (Mathews, 2010). Library users’ survey is an important tool to know the effectiveness of library services (for example to find out whether they like a new e-resource). Services that are not core web services, such as instant messaging or RSS, are more easily accepted by academic libraries. However, there is a need for the creation of integrated library online systems that will provide a universal platform for library services, following the example of integrated library systems (Gerolimos, 2011).

### Conclusion

Academic librarians can effectively teach students to identify credible resources on the net. In many occasions, they will have to assume the role of a teacher or a guide helping the users to access the relevant information available and evaluate the internet resources for their authenticity. The organization of library services and their dissemination must be based on marketing strategies to satisfy the consumer of information, the library user. Instead of using every possible means to market library services to attract the users to the library, library must also create a perfect environment to cultivate scholarly activities.

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