ICT based Information Services to support Universities Research

Abstract:

Universities primerily designed to conduct academic research in all areas of universe of knowledge for which up-dated information is the basic requirement. University libraries invest a huge amount of money on collection development, processing and storage of information resources to support the research undertaken by universities. Effective utilization of these resources can be achieved through ICT based information services of university libraries. This is the main focus of the paper. The paper also deals with the new ICT based tools to assist Universities libraries developing and delivering appropriate information services and products.

Introduction

In the field of academic research the contributions of universities is at the top of the list. The quality of research depends on the availability of latest information with the researchers in their areas of interest. University libraries plays a vital role in the provision of latest information to the researchers by acquiring the specific resources in library and making them available to the researchers. The Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) acts as the best medium to establish link between researchers and information resources. With rapid advancement in on-line technology sector the Libraries are experiencing a period of radical changes in all their activities, particularly while providing information services to their users. This new demand brings forward a number of unanswered questions. One of them, posssibly the biggest, what is preventing librarians and information professionals from developing successful promotion of information services? Every library starting from the huge university set up to a small school establishment is facing the same challeng. Promotion strategy of information services in the line of their provisions through new information technologies particularly in Internet responds to these challenges. Provision of information or promotion of information products or marketing of information services in a library ultimately all aim towards Ranganathan's concept of "right information ot right users at right time" – the theory behind reference or information service.

Marketing concept in Library

Information, altough in tangit form, is an Economic product vaible for selling as well as amenable for purchasing. Promotion of information for availability of it with maximum number of clientels needs a strong marketing strategy. Marketing, as Philip Kotler writes "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",[1] and Adam Smith says "Marketing is a stance and an attitude that focuses on meeting the needs of users." And we commenly belief the marketing concept holds that the key to achieving organizational goals consists in determining the needs and wants of target market and delivering the desired satisfactions.

Marketing is a process that can help managers of libraries and information centers in achieving self-sufficiency in their resources and to provide an optimum level of services to reach more potential users and to encourage the use of library resources. This naturally requires a shift from product or service orientation to customer or need orientation. Different marketing concepts provide librarians various types of tools for collecting and analyzing useful data about information needs of customers, which assists in designing, developing and delivering appropriate services.

Levels of Marketing

Primarily there are two levels of Marketing:

Strategic Marketing: -

Strategic marketing attempts to determine how an organization competes against its competitors in a market place. In particular, it aims at generating competitors.

Operational Marketing: -

Operational marketing executes marketing functions to attract and keep customers and to maximize the value derived for them, as well as to satisfy the customer with prompt services and meeting the customer expectations. Kotler also said that the same "Business success is not determined by the producer but by the customer."

In the early conceptualization of a library's and information center's concept of customer orientation embedded into it. Moreover, Dr. Ranganthan's [2] concept of the five laws of library science had the marketing concept at their core. The five laws were:

1. **First Law**   : Books are for use; (Maximize the use of books or information product)
2. **Second law** : Every reader his/her book (Reader as a is the prime factor and his/her need must be satisfied)
3. **Third law** : Every book its reader (Find a reader or customer for every book or information product).
4. **Fourth law** : Save the time of the reader (Organize information in such a way that the reader finds his desired information promptly. Don't dissatisfy a customer).
5. **Fifth law**   : A Library is a growing organism (Emphasis is on comprehensive and evolutionary growth. To go on increasing products or books and customers or users in library). A focus on customer needs (second law) and wants through saving of time (fourth law) is clearly emphasized in these laws devised in way back to 1931. Also the third law relates to finding a reader, probably implying that the library should reach out to the customers. Thus though customer focus long been advocated in the library profession, it may be refined to suit the current context of the market.

Marketing Strategy in the field of Information:-

A Strategy is only an articulation of what we plan to achieve. In the field of information marketing strategy is based on a set of key principles:

Knowledge based Organization:

The University/Institute is a knowledge- based organization. (Information Industry). Information is critical to the university's success and needs to be managed as a strategic resource. University/Institute systems should enable people to create, analyse, publish, store and archive data.

Access:

Potential users of information should have ready access to the University's/Institute's Information, whether in campus or remotely, according to need.

Information Infrastructure:

The University Institute will provide an information infrastructure to facilitate information handling processes and procedures across the University and to ensure that they are coherent and coordinated.

User of Information:

All users should be fully aware of their rights and responsibilities in the handling of Information.

Communications:

The University/institute will provide a communication system for the rapid distribution of information with staff, students and external stakeholders.

Ownership:

Each area of information or element of data should have a custodian who will be responsible for ensuring the quality of the data and for implanting the access policy.

Factors Influencing Information Market

Following are factors that will influence the information market-

1. **Market Size:-** The market networks coming up at national regional and global level, the marketing and promotional activities associated with them will increase awareness of information at all levels among potential users.
2. **Number of venders:-** It is not expected that there will be exponential growth of information

suppliers as it involves specialization, huge financial backing and enormous efforts.

3. **New entrant to the market:-** This is of greatest significance to the information industry. It is at the top end of the market that the greatest interstices. It is true that the entry price is highest, but the resource of some of the new entrants are higher still, on the positive side, the interest of such potential new entrants can only confirm the future growth potential of the market.

4. **Services and strategy:-** Services and strategy are the heart of the future information that will define the scope of the market and to which suppliers must orient both their operations and their planning.

Marketing Strategy of Information in Libraries and Information Centers:

A library is a social and service institution providing information to its members. Its traditional functions include selection, acquisition, storage, processing, circulation and reference. Over a period of time, due to change in the nature of demands by the clients, libraries have expanded their document delivery systems. Today translation, editing, publishing and reprographic services have been added to the traditional services mentioned in the following table: -

S. No	Activities	Services/Products
1	Selection and collection of documents	Bibliographies, Current awareness
2	Indexing and abstracting	Indexed bibliographies, Abstracting bulletins, Custom searches.
3	Extraction	Digest extracts, Descriptive reviews/state of the art report.
4	Evaluation	Critical review of area, critical compilation of data, Criteria for experimentation etc.
5	Other activities	Translation, Editing, Publishing, Reprographic services and On-line services.

Marketing research in Information services

Due to importance of marketing strategy in Information Services many studies have been conducted in this area. Some are as under:

Khali Klaib (1994)[3] conducted a survey of libraries and information centers in Jordan to examine the application of the marketing concept to the products and services of LIS and to investigate users attitude towards free or fee-based service.

Vaishnav (1997)[4] did a case study of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University Library and pointed out that the university library uses marketing process to satisfy the needs and wants of user. Panday (2001)[5] conducted a survey of the M S University of Baroda to explore the feasibility of marketing library and information services and products. Sharma and Choudhary (2003)[6] conducted a case study of All India Management Association library. The author found that experience of marketing of information services and products is very encouraging at the AIMA library. It can be safely concluded that marketing methods if applied appropriately can make a vital contribution to library and information work.

Modern Ways of Marketing Information Services

There have been so many new methodologies for promoting in formation services of a library. Some are mentioned below:

- **OPAC** - An Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) is a computerized online catalog of the materials held in a library, or library system. The user in the library can search the bibliographic database and find specific information online. The search facility also aprises the user about the availability of each item for circulation, including current status of individual copies of a title and reserve status. The scope of these services include:-
  - **Online Catalogues:** The catalogues of Title, Author, Subject, Classified, KWIC Index, Publisher, etc. are available online.
  - **Current Serials:** To provide online information on holdings of current serials including recent issues received in library.
  - **Recent Additions:** To make available new additions to the library, to the users.
  - **Multiple Databases:** To support the defination of multiple databases based on types of documents for searching in OPAC.

- **Other services from OPAC Client:** Updating subject interest profile for SDI by users themselves; request for acquisition of a document; while browsing / searching various catalogues, facility to develop request online for putting a specific title on reserve, etc.

Web OPAC – [7]

Web OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) is a web based search platform, developed with advanced Information technologies for serving information to the users at the fingertips, regardless of physical location whether the member is in the library or at a remote location. It brings the library online by presenting bibliographic data in a read only manner. Following are some of the library services can be made available through WebOPAC:

- Library Catalogue
- Search facility on entire database
- New Arrivals
- Current Awareness Service C.A.S.
- Selective Dissemination of Information S.D.I.
- Journals list, Online Journals
- Latest Issues of journals
- Popular Documents - based on circulation and reservations
- Place Reservation / hold on certain documents
- Outstanding List - renewal facility optional
- Procurement request for purchasing new books and other media
- Approve Document for procurement
- User feedback

Library Blogs[8]

Blog is a website, usually maintained by an individual, contains chronologically the brief entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material like audio, video, graphics, etc. Promoting library's services, resources, and programs online becomes a lot easier with the help of a blog. Blogs can be very effective tools for reaching online audiences.

Marketing library services: Many libraries have already been using blogs in various ways for different purposes. The most obvious applications of blogs are for propagating library news, notices and services, which are needed to be updated frequently and easily. Sometimes the services of a library are valuable but costly that their promotion and sale become obvious. Here blogging acts as a cheaper means for their promotion. Blogging software helps in making the job easy enough for anyone to do it. Besides this there are other ways of using blogs in a library, some are here:

Promoting Library Events: A blog created for a library can promote its rerular events and programs. The blog reachs out beyond the visitors of regular Web site of the library. The RSS feed can be set up for the blog to allert everyone in the community to include the headlines of the library on their sites or can use an RSS newsreader to see what is up at the library. Libraries can also try E-commerce sites to turn each visitor into a repeat customer. On the blog site an e-mail subscription form can be put up to encourage visitors to sign up for permission. Through this permission-based marketing library news can be sent regularly straight to the user's in box. By this way an opportunity can be availed to invite visitors to come back to the library or its Web site more frequently. In order to make the blog distinguish among others some special content that captures readers' interest should be included.

Supporting Users: Most of the library visitors hunt the library on-line to find out what new materials like books, videos, CDs, or DVDs have been added to the collection. Reguler updating of the information may serve the clients by setting up topics on your blog for each genre: mysteries, horror, science fiction, romance, and so on. The college and university libraries can prepare special alerts about new resources for particular departments or colleges through blog.

Community engagement: In library blog new book reviews and book award lists can be posted for information as well as selection for users. An online book discussion area can be created for readers to recommend books. The users community can also be invited to comment and suggest for inclusion and modification in the blog.

Other applications of blogs in libraries[9]

The blogs developed for a library can be used:

- to provide Current Awareness Service (CAS)
- to provide Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)
- to highlight news or resources of interest

- to post book reviews from students, faculty, and staff members
- to announce library news and events, to announce New Acquisitions in library
- to use as library newsletter
- to use as Reference Desk
- to use as libraries consortia
- to link recommended web sites

The relevance of blogging to libraries :

- blogs are an excellent way to stay current
- Librarians are great filters of information
- blogs are ideal for disseminating all types of information
- blogs are ideal for commenting, expressing opinions and
- blogs are ideal for discussing implications
- And to provide local information

Conclusion :

In recent times research and development efforts have been mainly focused on problems, which required access to information. In University libraries, a huge amount invests on collection development, processing and storage of information resources. Effective utilization of these resources and services can be achieved through marketing approach. Such tools to assist University/institute developing and delivering appropriate services and products.

References:-::

1. KOTLER (Philip). Marketing management: analysis, planning, implementation and control 1994. Prentice-Hall of India; New Delhi.
2. RANGANATHAN(S.R.). Five laws of library science. 1931. Madras Library Association. Madras.
3. KHALI KLAIB(F J A). Marketing of information products and services by libraries and information centers in Jorden. Ph.D Theses.1994. Jiwaji University Gwalior
4. VISHNAV(A.A.). Marketing university liberies.1997. Rawat. Jaipur
5. PANDAY (S N). Information marketing: need of the hour. ILA seminar papers. 47th. All India library conference.2001. Warrangal
6. SHARMA (R) and CHAUDHARY (P.K). Marketing value added management information to user community: a case study of AIMA library. 48th All India library conference.2003. Bangalore.
7. http://www.libsuite.com/webopac.htm
8. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OPAC/
9. http://library.iimcal.ac.in:8080/webopac/OpacHelp/opac4d6a.htm

****

P K TRIPATHY
LIBRARIAN,
R I E (NCERT), BHOPAL