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# **Marketing and Promotion of E-resources**

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**ABSTRACT:** In the digital era, e-resources are becoming part of global literature. Hence, libraries cannot collect only printed materials. As for libraries, they need to do collaborative efforts in resources sharing at national and international level to gain wider access to e-resources at reasonable cost. As for library professionals, they should participate in marketing process to attract more users, trying to fulfill necessities in budget, ICT and marketing skills. The purpose of this paper is to review literature on marketing regarding budget allocation, ICT skills, marketing skills and to identify marketing tools/techniques for e-resources. It cannot be definitively stated that budget allocation, ICT skills and marketing skills will be challenges in every institution to conduct marketing. However, the results provide a basis for libraries to consider marketing and necessities in marketing. This paper also provides a useful overview of marketing and promotion of e-resources and awareness of necessities in budget allocation, ICT skills, and marketing skills for both working librarians and future librarians. It presents marketing tools/techniques for e-resources as well.

**KEYWORDS:** Marketing, Promotion, E-resources, Library

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The UK Chartered Institute of Marketing (2007)<sup>[1]</sup> defined marketing as "the management process which identifies, anticipates and satisfies customer requirements profitably". In accordance with this definition, the main target of marketing is to make know the needs of user, then to satisfy those needs. Kotler (1995) cited in Jestin K.J. & Parameswari (2002)<sup>[2]</sup> observed that if organizations such as museums, universities, libraries, and charities want to gain political, social support and economic support, they need to market their causes and products. It is really needed because most of libraries depend on the funds from government. At the present time, not only business organizations but also libraries which are non-profit organizations are marketing their products and services to ensure their viability in this age of ICT rapid development. Because of mobile phone, computer, tablet, etc. taking place of books along with ICT development, most of the people are searching for information they need via those electronic devices connecting with internet. That is why libraries need to provide assurance for their viability.

Marketing is playing in vital role to sustain the existence of a library (Siess, 2003 cited in Kaur, 2009)<sup>[3]</sup>. Hence, today librarians not only need to realize the importance of marketing in libraries but also involve in marketing process. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the rapid development of ICT, library and information centers are acquiring more e-resources such as e-book, e-journal, database, etc. than printed books because of a surge in the demand of users and a significant portion of the global literature. Therefore, e-resources have a key role to play in the future of libraries. Unless the library professionals market e-resources, users will not be aware of availability of e-resources in libraries. Thus, unlike printed books, the library needs to market and promote e-resources without physical volumes viewed presented to users.

## **II. LIBRARY ALLOCATION FUND FOR MARKETING**

Challenges librarians are facing such as budget constraints, high costs of library materials, huge volumes of information, etc. are a justification to adopt marketing library products and services for librarians (Madhusudhan, 2008)<sup>[4]</sup>. If a library wants to market its products and services to the users, a marketing plan is required. Providing a framework for the effective, consistent and comprehensive development of marketing activities is the core aim of a marketing plan (Duke & Tucker, 2007)<sup>[5]</sup>. Therefore, a library should have a marketing plan to implement marketing process more effectively. There are many components constituted in a marketing plan. Dubicki (2007)<sup>[6]</sup> recommended that a good marketing process should include marketing mix-product, price, place, and promotion, also known as 4Ps so as to implement a marketing process for e-resources. He applied this marketing approach as follows: The product is the e-resource provided by the library to users. The price can be defined by the libraries in terms of convenience and simplicity users would experience in using e-resources. The place or channel that the library has is online accessibility

via the library's Web site to deliver e-resources, either from the physical library, or remotely from places such as homes, offices, or schools. Promotion is through advertising, public relations, incentives and personal selling all steered at creating awareness of features and benefits of a service to users. In order to achieve this process, a good marketing plan with specification of elements of, time, skills and resources are required.

Kennedy (2011)<sup>[7]</sup> also noted that a standard marketing plan includes who the library will market to (the target), why it is marketing (the goal) and evaluation of marketing techniques (assessment) and budget. Bhardwaj & Jain (2016)<sup>[8]</sup> suggested that a marketing plan with yearly budget should be developed by the libraries. Dubicki (2007)<sup>[6]</sup> also assumed that a marketing plan can be a helpful tool "in securing funding to cover promotional costs because the detailed information collected for the marketing plan can provide as the basis for requesting those funds". Kanaujia (2004)<sup>[9]</sup> recommended again that separate financial support is vital for conducting effective marketing. According to the above mentioned scholars, budget is a crucial point in successful marketing of library products and services.

On the other hand, there is still a problem of budget allocation in the library to conduct marketing. Dubicki (2007)<sup>[6]</sup> mentioned that limited marketing expertise coupled with lack of funds for marketing and promotion suppresses marketing efforts in the library. Libraries frequently either reallocate costs to develop the marketing plan from an already fixed budget or need to seek funds from grants or partnerships because no funds were allocated for marketing and use of internal resources to create promotional materials. Brannon (2007)<sup>[10]</sup> observed that additional funds were needed by Denton Public Library to develop promotional campaigns. Hence, it searched for external fund and got \$ 2500 grant from the North Texas Regional Library System that founded for library promotion assistance for the marketing campaign of e-resources. Broering, Chauncey & Gomes (2006)<sup>[11]</sup> investigated that a community outreach project by the medical library of the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine in San Diego was developed with funds from a Pacific Southwest Region Medical Library National Network of Libraries of Medicine.

Kavulys (2004)<sup>[12]</sup> also found that public universities and private universities in Kenya are facing inadequate funding to execute marketing activities. Kennedy (2011)<sup>[7]</sup> conducted a review of the 24 studies published from 1994-2009 in library sciences on marketing techniques for e-resources. According to the findings, nine of 24 libraries presented "having either no budget for marketing or did not mention budgeting" at all. A specific dollar figure for their budget, from the least \$137 to the greatest \$3000 for marketing was mentioned by five of them. Jotwani (2014)<sup>[13]</sup> revealed that libraries had no specific budget allocation for marketing e-resources in the Indian Institute of Technology Libraries. Rind, Subhpoto & Sheikh (2016)<sup>[14]</sup> surveyed that libraries had sufficient budget to be spent for marketing. Lindsay (2004)<sup>[15]</sup> furthermore said that "the library's annual budget does not usually include funding specifically for marketing". Edewor, et al. (2016)<sup>[16]</sup> also studied that lack of funds is one of the major barriers in marketing library and information services.

According to those studies, most of the libraries have not allocated budgets for marketing although budgeting for marketing being imperative is essential in marketing plan to create awareness of the library products and services to the users. That is one of the challenges most of the librarians are facing to implement marketing activities in library.

### **III. ICT SKILL**

As for librarians, the age of waiting for users who will come to search for information in the resources provided by the library is over. Nowadays, librarians need to market their products and services to the users because of information explosion challenges along with ICT growth. If the librarians do not communicate with users, the users will choose other options to meet their information needs.

Patil & Pradhan (2014)<sup>[17]</sup> also suggested that librarians need the following professional skills for marketing library products and services;

- Awareness of users' need, knowledge of conducting user surveys, etc.
- Ability to obtain feedback from users and skill to analyze the feedback
- Most important quality of taking right decision at right time
- Technical knowledge such as use of internet, web page design and presentation skills
- Knowledge of various marketing strategies



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Among the above mentioned professional skills, ICT is one of the skills all library professionals need to have in marketing of their products and services. Jessey A. & Rao (2016)<sup>[18]</sup> stated web based marketing helps the library contact enormous users and it more interactively serves people. Libraries have to start advertising library activities using interactive web tools for highest usage of electronic information resources and services. ICT can make the library well-known speedily. The librarians can also get feedback about libraries from the users in a few minutes. That is the strong point of ICT in marketing.

Jessey A. & Rao (2016)<sup>[18]</sup> also identified some interactive web tools/techniques used for marketing as follow;

**Wiki:** a web site that helps in both creating and editing of web pages. Wiki can be used to share knowledge, provide lists of resources, collect user feedback, etc. Internal wikis can also be created by libraries to communicate among library staff.

**Blog:** Libraries can create blogs to promote new books, provide subject guides and update information, to communicate with users, to list new acquisitions, etc. The library user can comment on the sense of library among the users.

**RSS (Really Simple Syndication):** RSS helps the library to inform user with latest information and latest books or e-resources added to the library, to provide schedules of workshops, links to video/audio, etc.

**Instant Messaging:** text messaging or chat service that helps to communicate with the users directly can be used to provide status of inter-library loan, advice about using library, helpful links and URLs, etc.

**Podcast:** The library can use podcast to share audio programs such as broad cast speeches and interviews, audio streams of lectures and book reading, offering tips for accessing resources, etc. for visually challenged users.

**Vodcast:** The library can use vodcast to share video programs to explain the procedures of library activities such as instructing users about the use of library catalogue, guidance for accessing library resources from remote area, demonstrating plagiarism checking, etc.

**Library Website:** It helps to provide information about the library overview, library services, suitable links and online services, etc. It is also the best marketing tool in helping to increase usage of electronic information collections.

**Social Book Marking:** The users can identify and label the more frequently used web pages using social book marking. The libraries can use it in coordinating and categorizing web pages for well-organized retrieval, sharing resources with other users and permitting librarians to chase down users demands, etc.

**Remote Login Access:** The library can use remote login access to promote and market subscribed e-resources. It provides vital information resources support to library users who are away from attending workshop/conference or any research related activities. It helps scientific communication and discourse from distant locations as well.

**Quick Response Codes (QR Codes):** QR code that provides information to mobile phone users about the library can be used by the library to disseminate information such as links to library schedules, digital versions of the guide and catalogue guides, etc. QR code is the best tool in providing the position of bookshelves thus helps the users to easily trace for books needed.

According to the above mentioned features of web tools for marketing, it is evident that ICT invention plays such a cardinal role in marketing. As for library professionals of modern libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, keeping up with ICT is one of necessities to conduct effective marketing in library. Baro, Egiagbe & Godfrey (2013)<sup>[19]</sup> conducted a research on usage of web based tools in Nigeria and South Africa. The findings show that 77.8% of the librarians in Nigeria and 45.5% of them in South Africa have no skills in using these web based tools. Khan & Bhatti (2012)<sup>[20]</sup> revealed that poor training opportunities, lack of knowledge are some of the problems hindering the applying of social media in libraries in Pakistan to enhance the marketing of library resources and services. Baro, Edewor & Sunday (2014)<sup>[21]</sup> also stated that lack of skills is one of the challenges to using web based tools to create awareness about libraries.

Marketing library products and services is one of the responsibilities of library professionals. Today, library professionals should not lag behind the ICT age. Most of libraries especially in the developed world have already advanced to using digital libraries with ICT development. ICT can make library services expeditious and effective. Therefore, library professionals should pursue ICT development so as to reliably and expeditiously serve the users. Bhardwaj & Jain (2016)<sup>[8]</sup> alleged that "libraries should not leave any stone unturned to apply the latest technologies in promotion of resources and services amongst the stakeholders". Rind, Subhpoto & Sheikh (2016)<sup>[14]</sup> identified the librarians' opinion on ICT in library marketing. According to the findings, librarians opined that ICT is a necessity in marketing information products and services. The researchers stated that libraries can hardly operate without adopting



ICTs for information dissemination. At the present time, the fact that ICT is becoming one of the most desirable professional skills in any organization cannot be refuted.

#### IV. MARKETING SKILL

It is commonly acknowledged that image and visibility challenges have been encountered by libraries and archives for a very long time (Savard, 2000 cited in Gupta & Savard, 2010)<sup>[22]</sup>. This is possibly why librarians and archivists need to understand the importance of marketing. Duke & Tucker (2007)<sup>[5]</sup> also opined why marketing is important as follow;

- To fulfil the mission of the library
- To satisfy the users' needs
- To attract existing and potential users
- To highlight special programs and services that can only be provided the library
- To increase library services usage

So, libraries need to conduct marketing as a link between the library and its users for the sake of creating awareness to the users more about information on products and services available in the library. Librarians who will conduct marketing also need to have marketing skills. Librarians with marketing skills are more effective, diligent and successful in marketing library products and services than those librarians without such skills.

Rind, Subhpoto & Sheikh (2016)<sup>[14]</sup> conducted a research to identify librarians' opinions on marketing of library products and services in public universities of Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan. The data was collected using self-constructed questionnaire. The findings indicated that many librarians were not knowledgeable, lacked manpower and financial support to conduct marketing activities. Kanaujia (2004)<sup>[9]</sup> observed the same results. 89% of them strongly agreed that adequate manpower and financial support were required to implement marketing program. Khan & Bhatti (2012)<sup>[20]</sup> and Kumar (2014) cited in Rind, Subhpoto & Sheikh (2016)<sup>[14]</sup> also investigated that library staff lack knowledge on marketing. The study recommended that library staff should be made to be acquainted with marketing concepts and principles. American Library Association (ALA) 2013 survey found that there are calls for library staff to be familiarized with marketing and promotion skills (Lindsay, 2004 cited in Dubicki, 2007)<sup>[6]</sup>.

Although most of the librarians know the importance of marketing, most of them have no marketing knowledge and skill, which is palpably noticed according to researchers done by the above mentioned scholars. That is to say, there is a significance barrier to conduct marketing in the library. As mentioned above, marketing has a vital role for library existence and success. A library led by a librarian with marketing skills is more successful than that with a librarian without marketing skills. Therefore, librarians should have marketing skills for library to be long-standing and vibrant.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The selected review concludes that most libraries completely lack funds and some others have insufficient funds to cater for marketing. Some libraries are seeking funds from grants or partnership. Libraries should have an independent fund for marketing separate from general budget. Authorities responsible for budget allocation to libraries should allocate fund specifically for marketing owing its commendable role in the library. Other challenges are scanty and complete lack of ICT and marketing skills. Librarians need to keep up with ICT. Lack of skills, knowledge, and training on using web based tools/technologies are some of the barriers hindering librarians to conduct marketing. Related to marketing skills, although librarians know the importance of marketing, they don't know how and what to market. They don't have marketing knowledge and skills. Gupta & Savard (2010)<sup>[22]</sup> stated that national, international library associations such as International Federation of Library Association (IFLA), Special Library Association (SLA), American Library Association (ALA), Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) arrange various activities and programs on marketing and issue publications on it. Pertaining to marketing education for future librarians, library schools in United Kingdom, Pakistan, France and Estonia add marketing in curriculum as a core course or as an optional course. The study recommends that librarians call for studying literature on marketing for library professional and need to attend workshop, seminar, etc. to develop marketing skills. As for library schools without marketing in curriculum, marketing should be integrated in the curriculum as a subject and respective library associations in each country world all over should conduct programs and training on marketing as much as they can.



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