

Ranganathans Law of Library Science: A Guiding Principle for Marketing Library Services

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Abstract

Marketing in librarianship is an act of planning, organizing, dissemination and controlling of information services on a proactive and users oriented way that ensures the patrons satisfaction while achieving the objectives of the parent organization. To achieve maximum utilization of library resources, librarians must improve the way they market their services due to the fact that marketing is vital to the growth and development of any library irrespective of the parent organization. This paper discussed in detail the implication of Dr. S. R. Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science in marketing library and information resources and services. The paper therefore emphasized more on the importance of using the laws as guiding principle to provide adequate service delivery to the users.

Keywords: Marketing; Law; Ranganathan; Library science; Information science; Promotion; Advertisement

Introduction

The concept of marketing goes beyond the buying and selling of products or services for financial gain, but also to help the parent bodies or organizations in achieving their goals. Marketing in librarianship is an act of planning, organizing, dissemination and controlling of information services on a proactive and users' oriented way that ensures the patrons satisfaction while achieving the objectives of the parent organization [1]. Arachchige further explained that, most libraries seem to be under-utilized and therefore failing in preserving their tradition of excellence. No doubt, the failure is associated with improper application of Ranganathan's five laws of Library Science in managing Nigerian libraries.

Considering the importance of the five laws of library science in the day to day running of library and information centers, there is the need to apply the five laws as guiding principle for their operation and services. This is due to the prominence and relevance of the laws in Librarianship.

Library's main concern should be on how to effectively satisfy the information needs of the patrons, letting financial benefits to come from other sources such as charging membership fees, fines from overdue books, photocopying services, printing, scanning, space allocation, consultancy services, and other fee-based services.

Narayana [2] points out that the, "survival of a library depends among other things on its image in the minds of the patrons and the establishing authority". This image should be the outcome of the quality and effectiveness of the services, the ability to anticipate the desires and requirements of actual and potential patrons and their fulfillment.

Definitions

According to Rowley [3] "marketing is the management process which identifies, anticipates, and supplies patrons' requirement

efficiently and profitably" Kotler [4] defined "marketing as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, services and ideas to create exchanges with target groups that satisfy patrons and organizational objectives".

Kumar [5] observed that patronage is a function of good advertisement. He laid more emphasis on indexing and abstracting services and research advisory service as weapon of advertisement to attract patronage. Campbell [6] asserted that libraries as an agency of communication must communicate its services to library patrons via print and non-print materials (electronic media). Morris [7] opined that advertisement must clearly spell out the kind of services library offers such as current awareness service, selective dissemination of information services, internet search, CD-ROM search etc. Carrington [8] observed that one of the problems or deficiency in library services is that they are not properly communicated to library patrons. He therefore recommended advertisement of library services through news bulletin, posters, newspapers, memos, circulars, billboards and so on.

Marketing is the instrument through which these library objectives can be fulfilled. Marketing in libraries is essential for the following reasons;

- Promotes the use of information resources;
- Creates perception of need and thereby creating demand;
- Ensures the optimum use of information resources;
- Improves the image and status of the libraries and library professionals;
- Copes with the information explosion;
- Balances shrinking funds;
- Saves libraries from devaluation;
- Save libraries from declining reader-support;
- Persuades and encourages library users to assist the library;

Application of Ranganathan's five laws of library science to marketing of Library services and products. Ranganathan's five laws are stated as follow;

- Books are for use (the term book should be interpreted broadly to stand for information resources),
- Every reader his/her book,
- Every book its reader,
- Save the time of the reader and
- The Library is a growing organism.

His first law "books (information resources) are for use" [9] laid more emphasis on the fact that it is imperative to ensure library patrons use the materials that were selected and acquired for them. This is to prove that libraries do not just exist to store information resources, but also ensures that people have access to the available information resources, which therefore necessitate the need for information professionals to understand that it is essential for them to actively market their products and services. Library marketing is crucial to any information professional who intends to spread the word about their library and to rebrand the images of their libraries so that the society could now see the library as an institution where they can create and acquire knowledge. It doesn't matter what library type, it doesn't matter how large or small the library is, the most important thing is for the librarians to draw attention of the establishing community to library products and services.

Considering the second law, "every reader his or her book," means that information needs of library patrons are diversified and that there are books and other information resources that are available for each patron's consumption. Librarians' duty is to help library patrons to find the information they require and to ensure that the library patrons derive satisfaction from the services rendered to them.

The second law also emphasizes the need for Librarians to treat patrons equally. The implication of the second law is marketing of library and information services to meet user's information needs satisfactorily by collecting and interpreting information, studying and understanding the needs of patrons, and matching the needs with the available resources.

The third law: "every book its reader", advocates easy access to materials, and one way to do so is by connecting library users to whatever information they require. Placing books into the hands of people who do not necessarily know what they need is also at the heart of the third law. We could interpret readers' development as being part of the third law, since we promote books to patrons who may not be aware of the availability of those library materials which may offer opportunities for enrichment that other titles do not offer. Literarily, reference work has been identified within the third law, and this continues to be the case in the virtual library. Virtual reference services continue to grow in popularity in both academic and public libraries.

The implication of the third law in marketing the library involves performing activities that take library products and services to the patrons: publicizing the value and benefits, promotional campaigns, advocacy, public relations, personal communication, selective dissemination of information, social networking tools etc.

The fourth law is "save the time of the reader". Time is precious to everybody. Time management is a key to success in life. Libraries must strategize, and plan towards reducing the length of time spent by patrons while retrieving a material. To save time of the readers, Librarians must provide access points such as catalogues (card or OPAC or WebOpac), bibliographies, indexes, directories, author biographies, abstracts and other locators to save the time of readers. Saving the time of the reader also relates to how information is

organized and disseminated. In the libraries, information and communication technologies (ICTs) are used to save thousands of hours of the reader's time when compared to manual systems of information retrieval. The implication of Ranganathan's fourth law in marketing library and information services is that, it pays more attention to users' benefits and preferences. This has to do with consolidating and repackaging of information into appropriate format, making information readily available when needed, ensuring that the quality of services and offerings take user benefits and preferences into account. The goal of the library should be to ensure effective service delivery for optimum satisfaction of user's needs.

The fifth law, states that libraries will continue to grow in the future. Libraries will, likely continue to struggle with space problem of inadequate space if the library failed to adopt electronic materials. Librarians should know that availability of e-resources does not stop the acquisition of new print materials, and the level at which the resources grow has not changed.

The implication of the fifth law for library marketing is adapting the library services and resources to both present and the future users' need, including mobilizing resources, dealing with uncertainty about future user' need, new services, new patron groups, new environment, etc. The library should also repackage its services to keep up with other changes in the world. In order to effectively utilize these laws, library and information centers must adopt marketing tools and promotion tools such as exhibition/displays, posters, sign posts, Bulletin Board, electronic bill boards, flyers, advertisement, blogs, twitter, flicker, you tubes, mass media, proper and catching labeling, library guide and newsletters, extension activities, library tour, Library week/day, ICT based channels-website, e-mail, web links/hyperlinks etc [10].

The ICT can bring great changes in the library, thus Librarians must be prepared to exploit online resources which can be used to attract patronage. The e-marketing is another great asset in marketing library and information resources.

Bobinson [11] recommended the use of internet as a very good means of advertising library services. He enumerated some great advantages on internet such as eliminating all forms of barriers, another has to do with getting first-hand information, and internet is a time saving device.

The researcher agrees with Morris [7] internet, signs, cartoons and Library website has a great role to play in advertising library resources. Nowadays globalization has overcome any lapses that have to do with marketing of library and information services.

Library marketing is crucial to effective dissemination of information to library users. It doesn't matter the type of library but how effective the general public uses the information resources, it doesn't matter how large or small the library is-what is important is to persuade the community members to use the library, the library services, library's worth to the community, its administration, its staff, and its patrons.

It is important to understand the organization's mission to produce effective marketing materials that builds the library's brand and image, drives traffic to its website, and differentiates the library from its competitors. That's why in this highly competitive industry marketing plays a very vital role.

To achieve the dividends of marketing library and information services, librarians must begin to change their orientation about traditional approach to library services. The satisfaction of user's wants

and needs must be paramount in their heart. Information professionals must understand that it is essential to actively market their products and services.

In order to effectively apply the five laws, Bhatt [10] said that libraries and information centers must adopt marketing tools as follow:

Channels of communication

Rowley [3] divided communication channels into personal and non-personal. Personal communication channels are those in which two or more people communicate, through the use of words of mouth as the primary means of communication. Non-personal communication channels include TV, radio, posters, newspapers, e-mailing, bill boards, sign post, e-bill boards, websites, and other online resources. According to Sheila [12].” The library as a medium for the communication of information is a failure if it cannot communicate its own potential value to its community members.”

Atmospheric condition

The term according to Philip Kotler [4] who defines atmospheric as "the designing of buying and consuming environments in a manner calculated to produce specific cognitive and/or emotional effects on the target market." In other words, the working condition of our libraries, library structures and facilities, appearance of library staff, lights condition, conduciveness, sanitation, etc. All these are what constitute atmosphere and they must be healthy and suitable for effective learning and reading. Atmospheric considerations are often neglected in many library and information centers. It is not always a matter of extra cost but simply a matter of properly arrange and labeling of important areas in the library, this can be done by placing of relevant guides or labels to direct the patrons to the appropriate places of their interest, etc. This according to Kotler may help in attracting and sustaining users.

Medium of advertisement

Advertising is an important aspect of promoting library product and services. A library can advertise its products and services in scholarly journals, newsletters, radio, television, websites, faculty board meetings, and orientation organized for fresh students, staff induction program etc. Advertisements help in image-building. They can be in a short message, or staff can write long articles on new and existing library services. Librarians can appear on local radio and TV, highlighting the new role the libraries play in the present era [13]. There are a variety of ways of advertising online. Traditional print advertisements include brochures, pamphlets, newspaper advertisements, etc.

Leaflets

Leaflets include guides to the library and its special collections, Web guides, Reading list on ICT, and so on. Other brochures can be kept in the library at a convenient location where they would attract anyone who enters the library.

Posters

Posters offer good visual communication. They can draw attention when displayed at prominent locations and provide brief information about an event, service, resources etc. Old and defaced posters should be replaced on a regular basis.

Newsletters

The library can convey information about new acquisitions, new services, events and activities, fee changes, etc. Information regarding library can be included to convey a message to readers about the alertness of the library in updating and communicating small but important pieces of information. In fact, they are an excellent marketing tool because they list all the activities of a library. With ICT facilities in the library, an e-newsletter can be produced. The electronic version of the newsletter can also be included on the library website.

Extension activities

Activities such as book displays, lectures, quiz, debates, seminars, competitions, exhibitions, etc., can have a positive impact on the image of the library and can motivate people to come to the library and promote the use of its products and services.

Library tour

Library tours for new and existing users can be used to promote the library services. While on a library tour, users can be prompted to ask questions and find out more about new library activities, products, and services.

Library month/week

Organizing national library day/month can be an effective way to promote the library. A library can create awareness of its importance in society by constantly organizing such events. In fact, libraries can tag the week as ‘Amnesty Week’ for those who are yet to return their overdue books for free to allow for returns.

Electronic form of promotion

Libraries, especially in some academic, public and private libraries usually make use of ICT tools in designing, developing, and disseminating information about their services to satisfy their user’s information needs. They also use ICT to promote their products and services. ICT-based channels include library websites, blogs, twitter, YouTube and email.

Library website/web page

Library websites can be accessed by users at any time. The websites contain details about the library services, including the collection, subscriptions, service policy, terms and conditions, etc. It may also have graphics and multimedia advertising that can persuade visitors to use the library. The library websites should be continuously updated to avoid an adverse effect on the image of the library. The websites can also be interactive so users can communicate with staff. For this purpose, a directory of staff members should be posted on the websites [14].

Electronic mail/mailshots

According to Natarajan, e-mail is the most universal application on the Internet and it can be used for direct communication with potential users. There are many benefits to using email as a promotional tool. Mailshots are an effective medium that create personalized services, with information about library activities and events, membership renewals [5].

Newsgroups

Libraries can use newsgroups or discussion groups to build awareness among its clientele. According to Moorthy and Karisiddappa [15] a message (an article) is posted to the entire newsgroup. Other interested persons can reply/comment on the message. The topic can range widely, but each group is confined to one subject.

Blogs

Blogs are continuously-updated websites, created by individuals or organizations which are usually free. Libraries can use blogs to promote their products and services by making it appealing and more informative to users. To get feedback, comments and suggestions can be invited from visitors.

Conclusion

As a matter of fact and urgency, librarians should try as much as possible to improve more on marketing their products and services. The satisfaction of user's needs must be uppermost in the heart of competent librarians. Libraries should also explore the use of ICT facilities and resources which can bring great changes in the way libraries acquire materials, process it and disseminate the information to their target audience as well as the wider community at large. The total adoption of ICT in libraries could be a little bit difficult because of the fact that libraries are not money making ventures but with proper application of Ranganathan's five laws of library science everything seems possible and easy. Having known that users' satisfaction is a focal point of discussion in all Librarian's gathering and it is also paramount to an effective promotion and marketing of library and information services; every practicing librarian should know that marketing is an attitude not a procedure and as a result of constant changes in library management system, it is therefore expected that libraries needs to develop effective strategies for improving the marketing, publicity and promotion of library services.

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