

**MARKETING OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES:
BUILDING A NEW DISCIPLINE FOR
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION IN ASIA**

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ABSTRACT

The concept of marketing is widely applicable in library and information environment. Marketing concept itself is changing and has different meaning for different people. Now marketing is whole organization concept and organization wide philosophy, which requires years of continual work. It is a way of working and a way of serving the customers in which every activity is committed to customer satisfaction. Marketing of library services is the effective execution of all the activities involved in increasing satisfaction of users by providing maximum value to them. It is a total solution for library and information centers. There have been enormous developments in marketing of library and information services around the world. The present paper explores the discipline of marketing of library services as a new academic subject in library and information education focusing on the Indian experience.

Keywords: Library and information science education; Marketing of library services; Information services; India,

INTRODUCTION

Libraries and information centers are facing a time of unprecedented change and challenge. Recent technological developments are creating new forms of information, new sources of information and new ways of providing information bypassing traditional institutional like libraries. There has been an increasing pressure on libraries to mobilize resources and become self-reliant. Library users are transforming into customers with rising expectations, diverse needs and wants, and choices. Now, the real challenge for library and information professionals is not to manage the collection, staff and technology but to turn these resources into services. The notion of services has also changed, from basic to value added, from staff assisted to self-service, from in-house to out-reach, from free to priced, from reactive to pro-active, and from mass-customization to individualized service.

As in such an environment librarians are finding new ways of serving users or customers effectively and efficiently. The principles of marketing have gradually

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been accepted both as relevant and beneficial to the library environment. Marketing provides an opportunity to see as to how they can offer effective and efficient services to their users or customers. There have been many developments at international level, which have directly or indirectly contributed for the growth and development of marketing in library services in India. Besides mentioning such international efforts in brief, the present paper discusses the developments taking place in marketing of library and information services in India. Further, it tracks the teaching of marketing of library services and outlines an action plan for further diffusion. It also raises several issues for further research.

DO LIBRARIES REALLY NEED MARKETING?

This is the very first aspect of employing effective marketing in any kind of libraries. Many librarians correlate marketing with profit and consider that libraries are not for making profits. Basically because they were not taught marketing at library schools and do not see marketing to have anything to do with running a library. In 1996, the author presented a paper on an aspect of marketing of library services at his first national conference. During the discussion there were clear-cut division of the house, between people who pleaded in favour of marketing and those who had their reservations about applying business concept in libraries. Over the years, events have indicated that marketing is important for libraries to live and survive. Its importance is often not recognized there in libraries but we do not recognize it, and many see marketing with suspicion and consider that it is a discipline that belongs to other world.

The interest in marketing has tremendously increased over the last two decades in almost all kind of libraries throughout the world. Even the reasons for applying marketing have not been much different. Some of the common reasons identified are that: the founding missions are increasingly ill-suited for the demands of the marketplace; budgets are becoming tight while units are claiming for more support; the recruiting and fund-raising arenas having become extremely competitive; and the rising competition among similar information services providers. There are some other reasons which require marketing orientation in library and information services, such as it helps in managing libraries better; it brings commitment to customer focus; publicizes the benefits of the library services and listening to customers needs; it helps in making users feel better that they use library again and again; and it improves the library's image. As such there is always a need for LIS staff to develop a more responsible attitude towards their customers, ensure credibility and a positive attitude to face new challenges as well as opportunities. There is always a greater need for appreciation and good understanding for marketing concept among

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librarians as what it can do for them. Reasons for applying marketing in any library is not to increase profit but to increase in user satisfaction and increase of funding in turn, since increased customer satisfaction will often result in their increased willingness to use and pay for services offered. An enhanced perception of the value of the library will translate into increased level of support to the library.

WHAT MARKETING IS ALL ABOUT?

There is still considerable misunderstanding within the library and information sector as to what constitutes marketing. To some it is still primarily equated with selling and pursuit of sales, rather than customer satisfaction. To others for example, it is viewed as production of brochures, advertising and low level marketing communication. Even amongst those libraries that claim to have developed more sophisticated marketing approach, only a few have capitalized on full the potential of marketing. Much of the confusion arises because the marketing concept has changed from selling concept to product development and customer-focused concept. There is much discussion as what marketing is and what marketing is not. Though it is an issue that is discussed time and again in library and information circle but has never come to a conclusion. A soft approach to marketing may be as follows:

- Marketing equates management in service set up
- Marketing in libraries is an organization wide philosophy
- Marketing puts people to work
- Marketing is not cliché it is every one's job
- Marketing is not promotion or advertising, these are part of it
- Marketing is not selling
- Marketing is adaptable, flexible and open
- Marketing really never ends

There are several different, yet views to the concept of marketing. They can be broadly divided into four:

- (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

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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 maximum 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 frontliners, 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 increasing the benefits to users in relations to the efforts and cost.

For a library that recognizes marketing concept and has this orientation in its services will be the closest to its users. Marketing must be understood and implemented in a comprehensive way. No one concept will serve the purpose. Customer is at the heart of all marketing concepts.

IS MARKETING NEW TO LIBRARIES?

Renborg (1997) considers that "marketing is not new to libraries, it is as old as modern librarianship and the origin of marketing dates back in 1870s. The approaches of library experts like Melvil Dewey, SR Ranganathan, and others were marketing oriented. Even Ranganathan's Five laws have been seen in the light of today's marketing concepts (Ranga, 1986). If we correlate Ranganathan's Five Laws with the marketing concept of information and library services, in the following manner (Jain et al, 1999b):

- (a) Books are for use (Maximize the use of books/ information) emphasizes on the idea that
- (b) Every reader his/her book (Reader is prime factor and his/her need must be satisfied)
- (c) Every book its reader (Find a reader for every book)
- (d) Save the time of the reader (Organize information in a way that the reader finds the wanted information promptly)
- (e) A library is a growing organism (Emphasis is on comprehensive and evolutionary growth)

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However, the concept of marketing in libraries entered when Philip Kotler formally propagated the marketing concept in non-profit organization in 1970s and the concept was sharpened in 1980s when the concept of services marketing emerged.

There have been many changes in marketing of library and information services with the passage of time. According to Freeman and Katz (1978), until the early 1970s, "most libraries did not see much of marketing. Most marketing-related documentations were labeled with the concept of user needs, user training, and economics of information and the majority of the literature was in the form of practitioner's account." Tucci (1988) found that during 1978-1988, "the crop of marketing of library services was growing but was not ready for harvesting. During the period of this review, long time theories and concepts for marketing of goods, such as 4Ps and STP model dominated in marketing of library and information services literature. The need for customer focus was felt but promoting libraries was the main concern during this period." Cox (2000) emphasized that "there was increase integration of marketing with planning focus; continued examination of what marketing is and is not, specifically how it differs from sales, promotion and public relations; and increased new tools and methods for developing marketing research strategies. But, till now the service quality concept started challenging the 4P approach." Presently, the focus of the library and information services marketing is on relationship marketing (Besant and Sharp, 2000), internal marketing (Dworkin, 2003), image building (Bass Bridges and Morgan, 2000), and customer loyalty. Such concepts make marketing a library wide philosophy and desire involvement of one and all from front-line staff to board members. So, the marketing concept has changed from selling concept to product development and customer focused concept. Concepts like customer services, service quality, relationship management played a vital role in development of marketing from boardroom concept to whole organization concept.

IS INFORMATION INHERENTLY DIFFICULT TO MARKET?

Librarians are dealing with strategic important resource called "information" and are well recognized for services. They have users who have a need for information and are willing to use the library whenever need arises, acknowledge if they are satisfied with the service, and can recommend others to use the library that pay attention to their needs. The library and its users are natural partners. But, the customer does not see what he or she will get prior to being presented with the information. On taking the enquiry, the information provider may not know for a fact that the information being requested is available. The information provider may not know whether he or she will incur

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any charges in getting the information in the time required by the customer. In short there are many uncertainties involved here but it is not just information a customer gets when using the information department, it is also a service, service from the staff, user friendly environment, or user supported facilities. An information provider is unlikely to be able to answer every inquiry, absolutely accurately in the time span the customer requires. However, if customers believe that the service they have received is the best available then they will use it again. It is by adding value to information through service delivery that information managers can encourage usage of information service. The marketing process will show where the service can be embraced.

Libraries are the best candidates for marketing among non-profit service organizations. Here, the important thing is that can we see these benefits from the point of view of users and communicate in the way they can understand. The public image of the library comes through experiences or moments of truth when users really come into contact. All promotion, advertisement, promises, will be wasteful if we are unable to transform these experiences into pleasant ones and that too from user's point of view. The deciding factors are our own attitude and our commitment to the community. We who work in the library are the greatest marketing forces in libraries. Marketing helps show a library staff's expertise, further an organization's mission, promote productivity by quickly and efficiently finding the right information at the right time, and add value to an organization's products. Without any promotional effort, some key individuals may not be supporters or even users of the Information Centre. Libraries therefore, will look impressive and the librarians will emerge as activists fostering proactive services to the users. Every service activity must be performed with a conscious mind to meet users' needs exceptionally.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Some noteworthy factors for wider acceptance, popularity and development of marketing concept in libraries and information centers are described below:

There is an increasing interest of international and national professional associations and organizations such as in the US-based Special Library Association (www.sla.org) that has been giving a wider coverage on marketing in its programmes and activities. Its management division gives training and publishes bibliographies on marketing from time to time. Its advertising and marketing division has a discussion list on the subject (sla-dam@lists.sla.org). Similarly, the role of London based ASLIB (www.aslib.co.uk) has been tremendous, which published the first authentic text on Marketing of library and information services (Cronin, 1981). It also organizes short term-courses for working librarians and publishes papers in its *Managing information*, a monthly

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magazine. Such efforts are also employed by CILIP (formerly LA), to promote marketing of library and information services.

American Library Association's (ALA, www.ala.org) '@your library advocates Campaign for the World's Libraries' launched at the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, (IFLA, www.ifla.org) at the 2001 Annual Conference in Boston. This initiative boldly enables IFLA and over 15 national library associations who have embraced the campaign to make ALA's collective and individual accomplishments better known across the world. ALA has also published many useful texts on marketing.

The Newsletter-Marketing Library services (bi-monthly, www.infotoday.com/mls) started in 1988, gives specific coverage on marketing of library services. Since 1987 Marketing Treasures (www.chrisolson.com/marketingtreasures) has offered tips, ideas and insights to librarians and others on how to promote and apply marketing tools to their information services and products. Originally published as a paper-based newsletter, Marketing Treasures articles span the full range of marketing and promotion issues faced by all types of librarians around the globe. Many of the American Library and Information Science journals have brought out special issues on marketing of library and information services, such as, *Library Trend* 43(3), Winter 1995, *Journal of Library Administration* in 1983, *Information Outlook* 6(11), 2002, *Computers in libraries.*, 19(8) 1999, and *ASLIB Information* 21(9), 1993. Such trend has spread in other countries as well.

Emergence of the IFLA Marketing and Management Section (www.ifla.org/vii/s34/somm) in 1997, which comprises library professionals from all over the world who either work actively in marketing and management in their libraries or teach the same to future librarians. It is working for conceptualizing marketing in libraries, efforts for developing guidelines to teach management and marketing, and other developments of interest to LIS professionals and wider acceptability throughout the world. It organizes annual conferences, training programmes, brings out publications, newsletter, and also has a discussion list (market@infoserv.inist.fr) for marketing for academic libraries. In order to recognize best practices in marketing of library and information sector worldwide, it started IFLA-3M International Award in 2001.

The topic/module of Marketing of information and library services has been included in the syllabi of many universities across countries. There are also various institutions/ agencies/ associations running short-term training programmes on different aspects of marketing. Guidelines for Teaching marketing LIS (Unesco, 1988; Tees, 1993) are also important strides toward making effective marketing in libraries and information centers.

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All sectors of the libraries feel the need for seeking their services marketing orientation. Marketing is considered useful in academic libraries, parliament libraries, multicultural libraries, medical libraries, agriculture libraries and public libraries.

INDIAN SCENARIO

The developments taken place world over influenced the Indian librarianship as well. There has been a number of developments in marketing of library and information services in the country and some of these are described below:

The beginning of publication of literature on marketing of library and information science dates back in 1980. *The Indian Library and Information Science Abstract (ILSA)* started abstracting on this area in early 80s. Although literature reviews (Sewa Singh, 1991) assigned the key term Library Marketing in its volume by 1985, earlier to it, literature on marketing of library services was covered in library management. Currently a database on marketing of library and information services is being developed at IIM, Ahmedabad, which will be web-accessed and helpful to researchers in many ways.

It is an area that is being widely discussed in professional meetings, there is an increasing interest of the national professional associations and organizations, like Indian Association of Special Libraries and Information Centres (IASLIC), Indian Library Association (ILA), Society for Information Science (SIS), Medical Library Association of India (MLAI) and Management Libraries Network (MANLIBNET). In 1988, the first national conference was organized by IASLIC in 1988 (Kapoor & Chategree, 1988). SIS also selected the theme Information Marketing for its conference in 1995 (Kuldip Chand, 1996). During recent years it can be observed that marketing of library services has been included as sub-theme in quite a good number of conferences and seminars. Besides conferences many of the associations also conducted workshop and training programmes on this area as and when such need arises.

DESIDOC Bulletin of Information Technology has brought out special issues on marketing of library and information services twice in 1998 and 2002 besides covering articles regularly in volumes of the journal. The other professional journal which is bringing out a special issue on marketing of LIS in the near future is *Lucknow Librarian*. Besides, these, almost all the leading professional journals like *Annals* (New Delhi), *SREL Journal of Information Management* (Bangalore), *IASLIC Bulletin* (Kolkata), *ILA Bulletin* (New Delhi), *Herald of Library Science* (Lucknow) and others regularly publish articles on the area of marketing of library and information services.

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There has been increasing interest of researchers in this area. The Universities so far has awarded Ph. D. degree in this area. Some examples are "Marketing of information products and services by libraries and information centers in Jordan" (Khali Klaib, 1994), "The role of marketing in the field of libraries and information services: Future implications" (Mohan, 1998), "Effectiveness of marketing of information in British Council library network in India" (Bhat, 2002), and "Marketing of Library and Information Products and Services: A Study in Designing Economic Models with reference to Capital Markets in India" (Hiremath, 2003)". Recently one researcher each has also submitted theses on marketing area at the University of Rajasthan and Lucknow University. There are many more new researchers registered in many universities in the country.

The topic of Marketing of Information and Library Services has been included in the syllabi of many universities in the country. The Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre's (INSDOC) MLIS programme of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has a block on Marketing of Information Products and Services. Some other universities also gives emphasis on this area in the syllabi, but to a limited extent.

Besides, associations, various agencies and institutions are organizing training programmes. To cite a few: A workshop on marketing of information products and services was organised on 27 November –01 December 1989 at CSIR, New Delhi by Unesco, on 26th April, 1997 and Training Programme on Marketing of S and T Information Services, 28th January- 1st February, 1991 at INSDOC. A one day seminar was organized by UTI Institute of Capital Markets in association with Bombay Science Librarians Association at Navi Mumbai to discuss the issues involved. IIM Lucknow, has been offering training programmes on Marketing of Library and Information Services/Products.

There have been in-depth studies on marketing of library services in specific group of libraries and information units, such as National level study on marketing of library services in management education institutions (Jain, et al, 1995, 1999a, 1999b). Similarly, the study conducted by the Institute of the Public Enterprises, Hyderabad keeps in view the marketing needs of science and technology information facilities (Institute of Public Enterprise, 1989).

This clearly depicts that the interest of LIS professionals in marketing and makes it very clear that the discipline of marketing of library services must emerge as a new academic and research area in library and information sector.

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BUILDING AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

Reflecting the changed scenario, library schools in the country have started including this area in their syllabi to train future librarians. But, the progress so far has not been satisfactory in regards to developing marketing of library services as a discipline. This need is being expressed by the following statements:

"Periodical orientation has to be provided to the librarians regarding digital information products and services for better marketing" (Chandraiah,1996)

"Identification of marketing education as the.....influencing factor in the factor analysis the importance of formal education in marketing of services. It was interesting to note that 95.6% of the respondents do not possess any formal education in marketing management. Only 4.4% of them had formal education in marketing.... However one cannot deny the advantages of formal education." (Manjunatha and Shivalingaiah , 2001)

"The concept of information marketing has significant scope in the libraries; however it is not finding proper place in the curriculum. Time has come when the libraries will have to work as information sellers/brokers. They will have to collect information from each and every source in order to maintain their existence." (Chopra,1996).

"Marketing of information is described as being an immature stage of development and one of the reasons being the relatively low level of knowledge and lack of agreement on user requirements, wants and needs. Therefore, the study of information consumer behaviour and factors relating to his decision making, in other words his mind has become the central focus of current research." (Inder Mohan, 1996).

"Literacy in the marketing concepts and techniques is another important prerequisite which must be addressed seriously if information marketing is to become a permanent feature of library operations." (Dhawan, 1998)

"It is also known that librarians are not oriented to marketing of services in their graduate/post graduate library and information science education programmes. Hence, it is suggested to introduce a topic "Information Practitioner" at the master's degree level." (Siddamaliah, 1998).

The need for acquiring capabilities of adopting changes (societal, economic, technological, and educational and their implications on managing libraries) in the courses of teaching due to their imminent application in practice is expressed

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as follows: "Library and information entering into new phase so that in the modern economy the importance of information has increased and which calls for better use of existing services, and continuous improvement of information serves to meet the explicit and implicit needs." (UGC,2001). The report includes many facets of marketing at different places in different courses, but does not recommend for any specialized paper/ module on marketing LIS. Of course such need has long been felt and there are suggestions for model syllabi/ modules (Gopinath, 1988 and Gopalkrishnan, 1990).

CONCLUSION

There is a growing need for understanding and employing marketing in libraries and information services throughout the world. There have been numerous efforts on this area even in developing countries like India. But unplanned growth and the gap between the academics and practitioners hinders the development of the discipline. Emergence of this contemporary area involves enormous opportunities for further research. Some of which could be visualized are:

- Tracing the growth of literature: information sources, review of literature, creation of web based resources and databases.
- Tracing the stage of LIS marketing with regard to conceptual framework, acceptance, applications and barriers,
- Assessing the role of professional associations and institutions in bringing out marketing orientation in library services
- Status of marketing of library services in different kind of libraries and their comparative studies and future improvement
- Finding avenues for manpower development
- Identifying best practices and making an environment to replicate these.
- Minimizing gap between theory and practices

There is a strong need to re-energize researchers, teachers, practitioners, and policy makers to consolidate efforts to develop the marketing of library and information services as an academic discipline.

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