Assessment of the Roles of Marketing Indicators in Effective Promotion of Information Services in University Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Academic libraries have been depending on their parent institutions for a number of things, ranging from funding to publicity for their services. Academic libraries serve complementary purposes, such as supporting the research of the university, faculties, and students. Considering the role of academic libraries as libraries attached to higher institutions of learning above the secondary level, they are responsible for providing information resources and services to support the teaching, learning, and research needs of students, staff, and other clientele of their institutions. The study concluded that it is not surprising to say that a library has the largest serials collection in the county, but if potential users do not care about serials, then that story has no relevance and will not help make the library attractive. The study concludes that there are tools to help an academic library define its special story and then evaluate the relevance of that story. The story can be about the details of the library, e.g., great customer service, a large collection, and a beautiful building, or it can be about the needs that the library could fill in the lives of its patrons. One of the recommendations made was that it is pertinent to note that as a library develops its story, it should check back with its patrons and potential users to make sure that its story is not only unique but also relevant and meaningful.

KEYWORDS: Academic Libraries, Effective Promotion and Information Services

Introduction

Over the years, academic libraries have depended on their parent institutions for a number of things, ranging from funding to publicity of their services. According to some scholars in the field of librarianship, this has not been working very well for libraries, as Madhusudhan (2008) reported that librarians and information specialists have debated the idea of marketing for the information sector. Several things have compelled librarians to learn about marketing and begin doing it, especially now that the whole world has turned into a global arena where time, space, and geographical location are no longer barriers. It is obvious that academic libraries are experiencing rapid change in the use and mode of access to their resources and services; this can be attributed to emerging information technology, which led to the creation of a new gateway for delivering information services to library clientele. Information products and services in a multiplicity of formats have made libraries and information centers publicize the arrival and existence of some of their resources to clientele.

Some years back, few clients visited libraries regularly, particularly students, except during the examination period when they needed to read their personal notes

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for the benefit of passing their examinations. Considering the role of academic libraries as libraries attached to higher institutions of learning above the secondary level, they are responsible for providing information resources and services to support the teaching, learning, and research needs of students, staff, and other clientele of their institutions. Academic libraries serve complementary purposes, such as supporting the research of the university, faculties, and students. Support of teaching requires materials for learning and research, and of what use are the library resources if there is no clientele to effectively utilise them. The clientele of the university library is diverse, with varying information needs. This library's clientele includes undergraduate and postgraduate students, visiting researchers, academic staff, and other staff of the University. To a large extent, the library is often regarded as the heart of the intellectual system of the university or, better still, the nerve centre of the university. Aguolu (2002) posited that university libraries are an integral part of the university system. He added that they should not exist as inertia of knowledge but as dynamic instruments of education to enable their parent institutions to achieve their goals.

Branding and Patronage of Library and Information Science

Branding is one component of a marketing strategy. According to Corrall and Brewerton (1999), branding is the process of defining a library's story, distilling that into one short, appealing sentence that tells the whole story, and then visually conveying the story via the library's logo and other branding elements. Technically, a brand is a mark, or logo, combined with specific colors and fonts that identify a particular product or service to potential users. More generally, a brand is shorthand for the story that an organization wants to tell potential users about how it can meet a need in their lives. Raina (1998) asserts that a library's story is the articulation of the role it plays or wants to play in its community. To create a powerful story, the library needs to identify a role that no one else can duplicate. The story is meant to inform anyone considering using the library about what makes it special and worth visiting. The story can be about the details of the library (great customer service, a large collection, a beautiful building), or it can be about the needs that the library could fill in the lives of its patrons. The story might be that the library is a place where a community connects and comes together. It might be the intellectual center of a small town. It could be the tool that parents use to give their kids a head start in life. It could be the center of campus life for a college or a place where a student can feel part of a community at a large university. Any one of these stories would be compelling to people thinking of using the library. They are powerful definitions of what makes the library relevant and important in its community.

According to Weingand (1995), it is imperative to remember that as a library develops its story, it should check back with its patrons and potential users to make sure that its story is not only unique but also relevant and meaningful. It is great to say that a library has the largest serials collection in the county, but if potential users do not care about serials, then that story has no relevance and will not help make the library attractive. A meaningful story will motivate potential patrons to come to the library because they are seeking what the library provides. There are tools to help a library define its special story and then evaluate the relevance of that story. Rowley (2001) asserts that having a clear, compelling story is essential to a library's marketing efforts, but equally critical is the library brand look, that is, the visual

representation of the library and its story. The look is seen in the library's logo and its colors, specific typefaces that might be used in written publications, pictures of the library building, library cards, and name tags worn by staff—any visual representation of the library and its services. The look should support the library's story. This means that if a library story is about the innovation and excitement to be found there, the look cannot be presented in dull colors coupled with a sedate logo and stodgy typesetting. The story and the look must work together. When they do, they become powerful tools that quickly convey a great deal of information to current and potential users. Consistent use of the same typography can also trigger memory, thereby helping people remember and quickly recognize written materials from the library. It is important to understand that a logo and a brand are not the same thing. A logo is one piece of a brand, albeit the most important piece.

Publicity and Patronage of Library and Information Science

According to Wood (2000), our society's digital revolution has transformed the traditional quiet world of libraries. Open to debate is the exact form and role we can expect for academic libraries at the beginning of the new millennium. Dramatic changes are in the offing for academic libraries as a result of the digital revolution, such as: changes in the form of the library; changes in the relationship between an institution's library and its information technology division; changes in the way collections are acquired, organized, stored, and delivered; changes in the design of library buildings and facilities; and participation by libraries in consortia (Marcum, 2002). Publicity is given to library products and services through various advertising methods. For example, local newspapers and magazines are used for the dissemination of information related to the various programmes and activities being performed by the library, including specific ventures such as conducting workshops, seminars, and refresher courses.

Fayose (2000) noted that there are other information services provided by academic librarians; these include reservation services, which provide an avenue for users to make use of some books or other library materials for in-house use only. Other services include Current Awareness Services, Selective Dissemination of Information Service (SDI), translation services, photocopying services, and lastly, library instruction services, which is the main focus of this project work. Library resources are those materials which enable libraries to carry out their functions effectively. They are made up of books and other information-bearing media. Fidzani (1995) stated that the use of online public access catalogues (OPAC) and internet sources had become a major electronic source used by libraries, especially in Southern Africa. Students in many tertiary institutions are introduced to the use of libraries in one form or the other, in order that the users might know what to consult in their quest for information. Sweeney (1997) asserts that today, libraries are providing electronic access to a wide variety of resources, including indexes, full-text articles, and complete journals.

Conducive Environment and Patronage of Library and Information Science

The academic library learning environment is an individualized learning space and it is comprised of the library educational environment that is identified by an individual learner according to his/her experience, competence and personal learning goals.

The physical and virtual library learning environment contains the information related to learner's goal(s), the ways information is being received and perceived, the agents (peers, librarians, etc.) and tools (Juceviciene and Tautkeviciene, 2002). Such learning environment has two characteristics: content (that reflects valuable learning information) and context (library educational environment that is perceived by the learner in its totality and influences his/her learning process). Njanja (2009) asserts that every organization, irrespective of the nature and size, does not operate or exist in a vacuum but within a certain environment; and many of the forces that make up the environment usually create some challenges and opportunities which directly or indirectly affect the existence, operations, and survival or otherwise of the organization. Consequently, librarians and information professionals must be able to anticipate this changing library environment and develop the vision and competencies at all levels in their organizations/ institutions to embrace this dynamic future.

The impact of a conducive environment on institutional performance and success cannot be underestimated, and as posited by Adeoye and Elegunde (2012), organizations are starting to recognize environmental performance as a source of competitive advantage. Just like other business organizations, academic libraries also operate within two major types of environments, namely, the internal and external environment. In this changing environment, the user needs specific training in the use of library services, which are affected by information technology. User education means educating the user or giving an introduction to a user to help them make the best use of the library. When a user comes to a library for the first time, he does not know about the various activities of the particular library. In user education, the library staff introduces the user to their services, operations, rules-regulations, etc. User education has the potential to encourage and transform library and information users from dependent learners into independent, self-directed, lifelong learners. Without information literacy, which can be acquired through user education, undergraduate students are condemned to a lack of information, dependence upon others for access to knowledge and information, and even to acute levels of information anxiety (Adeniran, 2011). The significance of library user education cannot be overstated, because there can be no connection between users and materials or tools unless proper education is provided to the user, who may have no prior knowledge or idea on how to use such materials or tools (Akinbola, 2007). It will be wise enough for the librarians to see every user of the library as a novice and therefore provide a procedural way of educating or orientating them.

Conclusion

The study concluded that it is not surprising to say that a library has the largest serials collection in the county, but if potential users do not care about serials, then that story has no relevance and will not help make the library attractive. The study concludes that there are tools to help an academic library define its special story and then evaluate the relevance of that story. The story can be about the details of the library, e.g. great customer service, a large collection, and a beautiful building, or it can be about the needs that the library could fill in the lives of its patrons.

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Recommendations

1. It is pertinent to note that as a library develops its story, it should check back with its patrons and potential users to make sure that its story is not only unique but also relevant and meaningful.

2. The academic library should find a position that no one else can perform in order to create a powerful story.

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