

Chapter 4

Marketing Library and Information Services for Effective Utilization of Available Resources: The 21st Century Librarians and Information Professionals – Which Ways and What Works?

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ABSTRACT

Marketing of information products and services is very vital in the present information society. Of late, marketing of information services has emerged as an indispensable tool in the library and information service industry. In the light of this, this study examines possible ways of marketing information services by the 21st century information professionals for effective utilization of resources by the clients. This chapter looks at the following: the strategies already in place, the competencies needed by information professionals in the digital era, and methodologies that can be adopted for marketing information services available to libraries and information centres in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing of information products and services is very vital in the present information society. Of late, marketing of information services has emerged as an indispensable tool in the library and information service industry. This is so because library and information professionals in this 21st century have realised the benefits offered by the marketing of their services to their clients. One of the goals of library and information centers is to satisfy their users. In order to achieve this aim, library and information centers need to know what the needs of their users are, and how best to meet those needs. The importance of marketing information services for the purpose of effective utilization of resources among library and information professionals is sometimes overlooked. A possible reason for this oversight is the assumption that users would seek for information when such information is needed, forgetting the need to create awareness among users. The trend is that many users are not aware of the services and resources available for their use in libraries and information centers. Thus, it is important for the 21st century library and information professionals to find out the information needs and/or behaviour of users of library and information centres in different contexts.

Marketing of information products and services, among other things helps information professionals to ascertain the needs of their clients. It also goes without saying that marketing of information products and services plays a significant role in satisfying the needs of the clients in that it creates awareness of the availability of resources. Hence, this important area in the field of library and information studies should be taken seriously. In the light of this, therefore, this chapter examines possible ways of marketing information services by the 21st century librarian and information professionals for effective utilization of resources by the clients. The paper looks at the strategies that are already in place, the competencies needed

by information professionals at the digital era, and also suggests the methodologies that can be adopted in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Abels et al. (2003), an Information Professional (IP) strategically uses information in his/her job to advance the mission of the organization. The IP accomplishes this through the development, deployment, and management of information resources and services. The IP harnesses technology as a critical tool to accomplish goals. IPs include, but are not limited to librarians, knowledge managers, chief information officers, web developers, information brokers, and consultants.

Information organizations are defined as those entities that deliver information-based solutions to a given market. Some commonly used names for these organizations include libraries, information centers, competitive intelligence units, intranet departments, knowledge resource centers, content management organizations, and others.

Library and Information Services

There are many services offered by the library as there are many information services. Library and information services refer to those facilities, which are provided by libraries and information centers for the use of books and dissemination of information. In so doing, users' needs are met.) The well known existing library services are cataloguing, classification, circulation services, reservation, renewal, new arrivals, current contents, current awareness service, selective dissemination of information, indexing and abstracting, reference service, document delivery, inter library loan, externally purchased database, CD-ROM databases, access to other library catalogues, access to online databases, internally published newsletters, reports and journals, bibliographic services, and so

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