

Chapter 8

Marketing Libraries: Adopting Marketing Strategies in Nigerian Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Library marketing is a relatively new concept in Librarianship in this part of the globe; therefore, this chapter looks at what librarians think about Library marketing in terms of the new terminology, such as the use of customers instead of patrons to address their user; by explaining the paradigm shift from the orthodox librarianship to the modern one. The chapter explains in detail what library marketing is all about, what the library should market, the types of marketing strategies that can be employed in the library, and finally maps out all the marketing styles that can be adopted for a successful library marketing mission.

INTRODUCTION

A quick look at the Five Laws of Library Science as it is been used in Library Management today will reveal another place where marketing should be seriously deployed – The Library. According to Dr. Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan (1892–1972) he argued that library organizations must accommodate growth in staff, the physical collection, and patron use. This involved allow-

ing for growth in; the physical building, reading areas, shelving, and in space for catalogues, but the growth he never envisage was that libraries would go digital with increase in virtual buildings, reading areas (that has extended to the back of our houses, farms, hospitals etc.), shelving has become organizing digital collection databases in digital libraries and collections have extended to selectively populating the databases of library repositories with top ranked necessary electronic materials while cataloguing emerges as metadata creation. The patrons been the only component

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left do not also maintained his Ranganathan's view but has become more equipped with state of the arts Information Technology Gadgets ranging from iPods, Palmtops, Personal PC, Mobile Phones etc. for ease of accessibility of information resources for their use.

In the orthodox library it sounds strange to mention marketing because the thought that comes almost immediately one hears the word marketing is profit and it is therefore anathema for a non-profit organization like the library either public or private to engage in such activities as marketing. In recent times as a profession, we have long wanted to help people and we have focused carefully on providing information, but we have not paid such close attention to the details that can actually make or break us.

To complicate matters further, the electronic world, in whatever form it eventually takes, brings a whole new set of enterprises—information architecture, web design, content selection, changes in writing requirements, new elements for organizing the content, etc. The very concept of a physical library may or may not hold, but the mission is still the same - connecting content and customers through access and service. It is important to imbed marketing into this new enterprise from the beginning and not as an afterthought. Let us not repeat our historical mistake. –Soules, 2001.

The Patrons/Customers

The major customers of academic libraries in Nigeria are the school's faculties, students and researchers these the "old librarian" gladly tagged – Patrons. The library also serves the larger campus and the community at large, either as a publicly-funded or privately funded university, but the primary customers are a distinct group. These groups of users in the library marketing practice are referred to as customers; they are the ones who later turn out to be community leaders, corporate organizations movers and shakers, university faculty and citizens generally.

Soules (2001) quoted Russell Epker ; "board members want to see in students who will later come to their companies: ability to communicate, ability to build relationships, diversity (cultural background), willingness to take risks, creativity, multi-disciplinary capability, ability to work at e-speed, high intellectual capability, real caring for other people (instead of the "me" generation), leadership (not hierarchical, but innate), team player abilities respectively". How well do librarians measure up to these characteristics?

Accepting the assertion that information management is a service-based business, but despite the consistency of marketing by the front line personnel with service marketing theory we are still not marketing in the libraries.

This is the new reality as defined by representatives of the business world;

When Business Week published a picture of a librarian with a bun, glasses on a chain, and sensible shoes in March 2002, the librarian discussion lists buzzed in outrage. "How can they perpetuate that stereotype?" As librarians struggle to shed their stereotypes, suggestions run from how to dress (more businesslike, more casual, more like your boss, more like your boss's boss); to how to act (more friendly, less rigid, more confident, less aloof); to what to do (seize the day, get out of your comfort zone, be part of the team, make money, save money).

Then come all the helpful tips on how to do these things. Look for role models and emulate them. Eugenie Prime and Lucy Lettis are wonderful examples of corporate librarians who have captured the attention of their corporate decision makers. Keep statistics and document the value of library services. Hand out bookmarks, make yourself indispensable to upper management, anticipate needs and fill them, offer added value, have an open house during National Library Week. The strategies and tactics librarians espouse in the library literature seem to have no end. - (Cynthia, 2002).

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