# Marketing and Promotion of Information Services in the University of Ibadan Library

Low levels of library use among the target clientele of the University of Ibadan Library suggest that the library needs to do more to market its information resources and services.

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## INTRODUCTION

Marketing is one of the most ambiguous and intuitive aspects of information management, with many variables and few acceptable definitions. Consequently, its contribution in library services is difficult to measure. Technically, however, the marketing of information in a library setting is an exchange relationship between the library (as a service provider) and readers (as consumers) in an effort to provide client satisfaction.

In the promotion of information services, it is important to differentiate between marketing and selling. Whereas selling focuses on the preferences of the seller, marketing focuses on the needs of the consumer. The products and services provided should, therefore, be targeted at particular groups and clientele.

Marketing of information services is concerned with satisfying the needs of clientele. At the national level, the different arms of government need information at all stages during the planning and execution of their programmes. Adequate information provision through libraries has been known to add value to decisions taken by government, industries and corporations. A nation cannot achieve maximum development if it fails to harness, mobilize and utilize all its available information resources.

## MARKETING STRATEGY

All organizations have their missions and visions that enable them to focus on their objectives. A library in any organization should similarly have a strategic marketing plan that will enable it support the objectives of the parent organization. This plan has to be user-oriented and must leave room for existing and potential users to shape and influence its goals. Changes in the environment that may affect the organization, such as the introduction of information and communications technology (ICT), should ideally be anticipated.

Libraries are basically service organizations that should provide for the information needs of their clientele as well as meeting the goals and objectives of their parent organizations.

Marketing information services does not involve new marketing principles but new and challenging settings in customizing products to suit the targeted consumers; it involves strategic marketing programmes. Information providers must carefully study what markets exist for their services and what these services should be, as it is important to assess users' needs and their potential information demands.

## MARKETING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Market segmentation is an important concept for the library manager because it focuses on making products available to meet the needs of different groups, or segments, in the envisaged market. In most cases, while doing this, it is possible to identify trends in the segments which may not have been noticed otherwise. Market analysis and market surveys will also reveal the strengths and weaknesses of products produced by other organizations, thus enabling the marketer to improve on his own envisaged products.

In a university setting, the information needs of the community are not static. The various segments of the community (teachers, administrators, undergraduate students, postgraduate students and others) demand different services. Each market segment has basic values and there is a need to find out what these values are and to reflect them in the library collection in order to attract the different segments to the library.

Librarians in academic or research environments are compelled to continuously monitor the academic environment in order to provide customer-focused services, since the higher the quality of a library's resources, the greater will be the number of users. Resource strategy is important because users' needs have to be satisfied.

Librarians should back up their interest in users' needs with integrated marketing efforts as effective marketing will help demonstrate to users that a good library is something they cannot afford to be without. Users need to be told in clear terms what services the library has to offer them.

The advent of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research requires that librarians customize their services to their users. Librarians in academic and research environments are required to be multi-

faceted since they are in a field that is constantly changing, just as information changes on a daily basis. They should always be on the information highway if they want to remain relevant. New subjects are being developed and they should face the challenge of looking for appropriate references and updating the collections. Collection development should be an active process of not only adding to the collection but also assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the collection with a planned view of correcting the weaknesses and maintaining the strengths. Collections should be evaluated at least every five years to ensure that they are active, effective, cover research and teaching, and take care of all stakeholders. Non-circulating materials should be weeded and relevant ones integrated into the system to make the collection relevant and current.

Tseng (1989) opines that if librarians wish to remain relevant, they must focus on the information provider/user relationship. There is a need to package, customize and market economically useful information in more appealing and aggressive ways. Failure to do this will encourage others into the market place, who might take over the information-vending role of librarians as suppliers of information.

The concept of a library as a place for seeking information is changing and libraries that are not actively involved with researchers will not be effective or successful.

## LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Users' satisfaction in the 21st century will surely go beyond the boundaries of any library as the emphasis in librarianship is focused on customer service. As information is no longer location-dependent, librarians must now accept the fact that they cannot assume that students and teachers will continue to view them as the principal information providers.

Developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs) and the Internet are two catalysts of change in the academic environment. They are leading, to a large extent, to the replacement of the physical library with the virtual library of resources available elsewhere. The Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) have made it possible for university teachers, researchers and students to locate what they need without entering the library. Online subject search is now the order of the day and the virtual library is the challenge of the future. This move from traditional manual to electronic procedures means that librarians have to change their attitude and techniques to offer a more proactive service. Librarians should now be aware that they are no longer the sole link between information users and the online

store of knowledge, as users are able to independently search the Internet and the Web themselves.

Internet technologies provide unique opportunities by bringing together people who are geographically distant but belong to similar communities. Scholars in the same fields of specialization share their views and visions online. The virtual library is certainly the library of the future, and librarians need a change of attitude to enable them embrace this new challenge to their profession. Limited financial and personnel resources will be no excuse for not being in the centre of the information universe.

ICTs are an important tool for development, but they do not create development. Information development becomes sustainable when the people that use information participate in its production and information becomes knowledge through the process of being used.

Users need to be educated and trained on how to effectively use ICT to enhance their teaching and research. Librarians must rethink access tools, develop intelligent databases and redesign their organizations to enable them to face the challenge of ICTs. Professional library staff should be trained in ICT skills to enable them assist and educate users. Training in ICT skills and management expertise should be a continuous exercise. Staff need this expertise to enable them to handle the change from traditional to electronic ways of managing library resources, as a dynamic information environment demands continual renewal of skills. With ICT, libraries have to re-order their priorities; old systems have to make way for new and useful ones to suit the electronic age. For effective services, the acquisition of relevant skills is vitally important.

Just as a library is only as good as its catalogue, so the value of the Internet depends to a large extent on the tools used to search it. The use of search tools such as AltaVista, Google and Infoseek, to find Internet resources on specific subjects often leads to disappointing results as lots of irrelevant sources are obtained. Librarians are thereby challenged to develop sophisticated search tools to enable them select and evaluate Internet resources in particular disciplines and subjects.

Meeting customers' needs by improving resources and expertise in searching techniques is a good index of an active library. Users' perceptions of a library service that undertakes this approach usually change for the better. Expertise in database search (print and electronic) is thus an important factor in the marketing of information services; and signs of active marketing indicate that the services being rendered are healthy and competitive.

It is now obvious that information services in the 21st century will involve the existence of both print

and electronic resources, though electronic resources will be the more important. Libraries must, therefore, change with the times, as their duties are now dependent on their becoming learning organizations and not knowing organizations. As learning organizations, they need to have vision and there is a need to integrate that vision with strategy, value and culture.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

The University of Ibadan is one of the oldest universities in Africa, established in 1948. The University's mission is reflected in its motto 'Recte Sapere Fons' (which interprets as 'For Knowledge and Sound Judgement'). This mission has been practically translated to involve the enhancement of teaching and research. The University Library's mission, therefore, is to support teaching and research activities in the institution by making information resources available to facilitate the university's mission. In doing this, the library collection is made to reflect all disciplines taught in the university and also to meet the needs of new disciplines introduced.

The University of Ibadan Library, now known as the Kenneth Dike Library, is used here as a case study on the need to market information services to the target markets that are already available, namely: lecturers (teachers, researchers), students (undergraduate and postgraduate), administrators and others (including national and international researchers).

It is the oldest university library in Nigeria and served as a national library and depository of materials produced in Nigeria, about Nigeria and written by Nigerians for several years before the establishment of the National Library in 1964. As a result, it is replete with priceless resources on African history, African national issues, African leaders' personal papers and memoirs, including all aspects of Nigeria's history and development. It also has special collections of Arabic manuscripts and maps that date back to the time of the 'scramble for Africa'.

From its establishment to the early 1970s, the University of Ibadan was rated at par with its counterparts in the developed world of Europe and America. The University Library was then subscribing to over 6,000 journal titles and had current books on all disciplines taught in the University. In addition, the library used to acquire light reading materials such as novels and magazines when funds were available. These materials were for the spouses and children of staff. Sadly, the acquisition of these materials had to be stopped in preference for current books and journals when the library's budget was drastically reduced.

During the Nigerian economic recession of 1988–1998, current journal subscriptions in the University of Ibadan decreased from 3,626 titles in 1982 to only 317 titles in 1989. Book acquisitions were similarly affected. (Ekpenyong, 1993) The volume of acquisitions has decreased tremendously over the years because of reduced budgets and global inflation. Presently, only about 200 current journal titles are being subscribed to from university funds, and even the sustainability of this number is questionable for the future. Nevertheless, this is still the most well stocked university library in Nigeria, thanks in part to donations – particularly of journals and indexing and abstracting sources – from organizations such as the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the MacArthur Foundation Journal Donation Project and others. The library has also acquired some databases on CD-ROM, including *ERIC*, *Humanities Abstracts*, *Life Sciences Abstracts*, *Applied Science and Technology Abstracts* and *Social Science Abstracts*. The College of Medicine Library has also acquired a number of CD-ROM databases covering medicine and health, including *MEDLINE*. The Kenneth Dike Library has a local area network (LAN) of thirty PCs, a server and a 60-drive CD-ROM tower where these electronic subject databases on CD are loaded. For now, five workstations are dedicated to CD-ROM searches, but it is hoped that more workstations will soon be made available.

The library is used as a reference library by students and teachers of other universities. Statistics show a continuing increase in the numbers of users (especially students) from other universities coming to make use of the library's resources, particularly journals. Nevertheless, there is a continuing need to inform the target users that the library is very current with available information resource in agriculture, social sciences and the sciences.

Despite the attempts to improve the library's resources in recent years, the target clientele do not seem to be impressed. A recent survey on library use in the University of Ibadan library system for the ten-year period of study, 1990/91–1999/2000 reveals that the target users are not using the library as they should. During this period only about half of the matriculated students registered in the library (only registered students are allowed access to the library). In fact, the number of matriculated students progressively increased during this period, while the number that registered in the library system plummeted, sometimes to less than 15 percent as in the 1998/99 session.

Postgraduate registration in the library, though better than that for undergraduates, was still poor. Postgraduate students are mainly involved in research and should be registered in the library if they are to carry out meaningful research. A situation where, in some years, less than one third of postgraduate students register in the library, is alarming.

Even more alarming is the fact that, for each year in the ten-year period under review, less than one-eighth of the academic staff registered in the library. Teachers are supposed to be constant library users in their attempt to update their lecture notes and carry out research using journals and other research materials. Failure to carry out meaningful research and publish research findings in reputable journals results in stagnation of promotion – 'publish or perish'. It is intriguing, therefore, that even the teaching staff are not using the library. As for the senior administrative staff of the university, only a few who are embarking on Masters' programmes bother to register in the library.

This analysis reveals that the library system has a big problem of reaching out to its target users. One is forced to wonder why the library is not being used. Is it that the staff and students do not find what they need in the library? Or is the information marketing strategy of the library poor – possibly to the extent that most of the lecturers have better alternative sources of information? Are there some better-equipped resource centres in Ibadan or its environs that they use? If so, what can the university library do to improve its information marketing and resource use?

It is imperative that the library makes an effort to reach the academic community by sensitizing them about all the resources it can provide. There is an urgent need to market current awareness services (CAS) to all academic departments in the university in order to alert users on what is currently available in the library in their various fields. It is also necessary for the library to stock more relevant and up-to-date reference materials, especially for academic staff and students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Every prospective professional in the marketing of information services needs to be aware of changes in the environment that can impinge on the organization where they work. It is important to note that although useful information may be available in various formats, it is almost impossible for users to scan through all the appropriate available resources. To support academicians in their pursuit of knowledge, librarians should disseminate up-to-date information to them. They should take advantage of the fact that most database producers now supply subject databases on CD-ROM, with updates available via the Internet. In addition, many journal publishers are now making their journals accessible in electronic format. These developments have enhanced the availability of current information, and librarians can scan, select and customise an appropriate range of authoritative sources at regular intervals to alert

and assist their users. Alerting users should be performed on the basis of pre-assigned interest profiles. Current awareness service (CAS) can be delivered both electronically and in print form. CAS is typically an alerting service aimed at informing users of the availability of new information in their various fields of specialization. The efficacy of CAS will depend on its currency, coverage, cost and the relevance of its output to users' requirements.

These considerations have led the Kenneth Dike Library to decide to market its resources through CAS to all departments in the University in the following ways:

### Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)

SDI provides a way to keep users up to date with information that is relevant to them by registering their 'interest profiles'. Based on these profiles, new acquisitions that may be of interest to them will be sent to them.

### New Accessions List

This will be sent to cooperating libraries to advise users about resources available in the Kenneth Dike Library which they themselves may not physically own. With this information, users can visit the university library and use the resources available.

### Journal Tables of Contents

Photocopies of the tables of contents of new issues of journals will be sent periodically to the various departments to alert them about new publications in their fields of specialization.

Current awareness systems require a mechanism for creating and maintaining user-interest profiles and the database against which user interest profiles will be run. It will be necessary to evaluate the system to find out users' satisfaction in taking delivery of documents or of information on how to access other sources to obtain what they need. There is a need to be aware that most professional current awareness service providers (outside libraries) have formed strategic alliances with document delivery services such as BIOSIS Document Express, ISI's The Genuine Article, The British Library Document Supply Centre; UMI InfoStore and UnCover, to mention a few.

## CONSTRAINTS ON MARKETING INFORMATION SERVICES

There are many constraints that negatively impact the marketing of information services in developing

countries such as Nigeria. Some of those which particularly affect the Kenneth Dike Library include:

- The users of information believe that it should be free. Smith (1993) opines that people expect information to be free and this creates resistance to the notion that information has a price. This is very true in the University of Ibadan environment, where lecturers, students and other library users tend to resist the little amount they are asked to pay for services rendered (such as Internet and subject CD-ROM searches).
- When budgets of institutions are cut, their libraries are the first to suffer. Unfortunately, although the management of most institutions and organizations realize the importance of a good and effective library, they do nothing to give information the priority and importance it deserves. When finance is limited, the library is often the first unit to have its budget cut; the library's information service is thus always compromised.
- Inadequate infrastructure such as stable electricity supply and lack of an enabling environment to support electronic networking of the entire university campus. Cables are needed to link the Kenneth Dike Library to the other satellite libraries on campus to enable easy transfer of information. Presently, lecturers and students have to physically get to the Kenneth Dike Library to be able to access the resources available there.
- Lack of adequate financial resources to support and maintain ICT on campus.

## CONCLUSION

In the past, users were registering and using the Kenneth Dike Library because it was the only place where their academic and research ambitions could be satisfied. With the decline of journal acquisition from about 3,000 titles in the 1982/83 session to a mere 317 titles in the 1988/89 session, most researchers who could not find what they needed in the library had to resort elsewhere (Ekpenyong 1993). Although things have since improved to the extent that the Library now has electronic subject databases where users can search for information on their fields of specialization, many people still believe the situation has not changed.

The library made attempts to market itself in the past by making available a new accessions list and journal tables of contents to alert teaching staff on what had been received. This approach could not be sustained because of the high cost of doing this

manually. With the advent of computers and networking it is proposed that CAS be carried out online when the campus is fully networked. It is also hoped that the 21st century will see this library really marketing itself both internally (within the campus) and externally (to other higher institutions within Nigeria and abroad).

Academic and research libraries must continue to market and provide value-added services to their users in order to increase their efficacy, visibility and image. The fact that information is no longer location-dependent should warn librarians that in the 21st century information seekers will not automatically go to them, but that they should rather try to make information from all sources available to their clientele to prove their relevance. User education on the techniques required to obtain relevant information from the Internet and subject CD-ROMs should be an ongoing exercise in the Kenneth Dike Library. At present, both teachers and students seem not to be aware of all the information resources the library now has. The librarians in the Kenneth Dike Library should inform users periodically about the new resources (print and electronic, etc.) that are available. By providing such information, the library soon will see more readers coming in to find the latest acquisitions in their fields.

### References

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### Abstract

**Lack of an effective marketing strategy of library resources has been found to be the main reason why targeted users – university teachers, researchers and students – are not using the Kenneth Dike Library of the University of Ibadan as they should. It was found that less than a quarter of these targeted users register annually in the library. A more aggressive marketing strategy has been set in place to sensitize users to the wealth of information resources available in this great library.**

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## MORE ON MARKETING IN AFRICA

**Marketing information services in Botswana: an exploratory study of selected information providing institutions in Gaborone.**

Nkanga, N.A. *Library Management*; 23 (6/7) 2002, p.302–13.

A study of selected information providing institutions, in particular special libraries, in Gaborone, Botswana, reveals that a majority are in favour of marketing their services to their users. In practice, very few libraries undertake formal marketing planning and prepare marketing plans. Marketing was therefore unplanned. Promotion is the most commonly used element of the marketing mix. However, library marketing can no longer be confined to this one element. The whole range of marketing activities is needed for the effective management of special libraries. It is only through planning, as advocated by the Kotler Andreasen Keiser approach, that marketing will cease to be equated with promotion and take on its full potential as a vital management tool. (Original abstract)

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