



An Exploration of University Library Marketing

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Abstract

This paper will introduce the concept of marketing management of university libraries and is aimed towards carrying out market activities for a library in order to improve efficiency and service quality. Such a means of university library marketing should start the following aspects: a) establishing library marketing content; b) marketing channel applications; c) product strategy; d) marketing evaluation and feedback.

Key words: University library; Market activities; Product strategy

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INTRODUCTION

Modern Marketing Theory originated in the 1950. In the 1970s, Professor Lawrence of Canada's Queens University asserted that librarians should make use of marketing techniques in order to create new opportunities for library development. The national library community began thinking in the early 1990s about the feasibility of introducing a theory of library marketing. Marketing concepts gradually became accepted by the national library community.

1. DEFINITION AND CONNOTATION OF LIBRARY MARKETING

The definition of marketing is of interest and benefit gained by an industry from the customer in a way that

creates value for customers and that also establishes a solid relationship with the customer in the process. Its purpose is promise excellent value to attract new customers and retain existing customers through the creation and growth of customer satisfaction (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). This has similarities with the purposes of library marketing. In 1983, the American Library Association (ALA) published *The ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science* in which Library Marketing is defined as: "Libraries and information services providers offering for actual and potential users a series of skills and purposeful activities relating to product range, service costs, service modes and promotion of services (Zhang & Xu, 2010).

Referring to the definition of marketing, the author of this paper believes that any definition of such should include two aspects: a) establishing a close relationship with the reader through communication strategies so that the reader understand what resources and services are offered by the library, eliminating obstacle between the reader and the library guiding and encouraging the reader in the use of library resources; b) realistically developing product development strategies and deepening and innovating library serves in a way that enhances them and improves reader satisfaction by fully researching the wants and potential needs of readers.

2. THE MEANING OF LIBRARY MARKETING

2.1 Library Marketing Can Build the Authority of a Library and Win the Trust of Readers

In fact libraries and online search engines are essentially different. The library is a non-profit, not a for-profit institution, and its academic authority gives it a clear advantage in terms of reliability, classification and relevance of information (Zheng & Si, 2009). However, with the rapid development of the internet, online search

engine websites such as Baidu, Yahoo, and Google have provided a friendly interface facilitating the search for information and attracting a large number of users. More and more users enjoy web-based sources of information and online content. The library of today is just one of many means of meeting the information needs of users and for many users it not the main way that they choose. This competition has marginalized libraries so that when one mentions them, others will say, "Libraries? When was the last time I went to one of those?"

U.S. senior information marketing expert, Hugh Ruger, once said, "Most libraries have a problem with a lack of urban marketing and sales techniques." Ruger hit the nail on the head with this remark, pinpointing the weak point of library today (Chu, 2010). Therefore, marketing libraries today is really about setting libraries up as an authority and a powerful tool for readers.

2.2 Marketing Libraries Can Eliminate the Barriers Preventing Readers From Using Libraries

In recent years, with the emergence of new technologies, library resources, services, content and methods have made great progress. However, there hasn't been any good communication between readers and libraries. Meeting with the public, acquisitions, cataloging, collecting, and circulation are in the traditional line of library services. Among these services, only circulation departments have remained close with readers such that the reader's understanding is limited to the borrowing of books and this is what keeps libraries in business. The other capacities in which libraries operate remain poorly understood by readers. Most readers do not really understand the true meaning of a library book's call numbers, nor do they understand what sort of work a library does in terms of collecting resources, means of obtaining information and so on and this results in a gap of comprehension between readers and libraries. The marketing of library resources and services is an effective way of narrowing the divide between libraries and readers.

3. ANALYSIS OF MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR LIBRARIES

The author of this paper believes that an institution of higher education's library marketing strategy should include the following: a) developing library marketing content; b) applications for library marketing channels; c) product strategies; d) marketing evaluation and feedback.

3.1 Developing Library Marketing Content

University Library marketing strategy is based on then investigation and research of readers. Once one fully understands the needs of readers, one will be able to design a reader-oriented marketing strategy. In order to develop library marketing content, the author used

of immersive research methods going deeply into what students and teachers say about life, their feelings about their needs, and their perceptions as readers of the library. Through this investigation, I noticed much that has not been previously noted on this subject:

a) College readers have a high awareness of how paper documents are formatted, as well as understand the process for gaining access to them and borrowing them. They often patronize places that lend out books, however they sometimes waste a great deal of time searching for a book fruitlessly and leave empty-handed. This was a problem that many readers had encountered.

b) Professors that read digital resources at libraries including online journals and magazines had a high awareness of how to conduct research digital databases and library resources. However, students in the lower grades had a low awareness of such resources.

c) Readers generally had a very low and vague understanding of librarians' job responsibilities. This was especially true of their awareness of the services performed by academic librarians, about which they had almost zero awareness.

d) University readers in the lower grades had a general lack of basic information retrieval skills.

e) Seniors near graduation and graduate students usually obtained job information from relevant job websites rather than from the school library.

f) Free space in libraries such as study rooms and reading rooms were very popular with readers. They are very willing to learn in such environments and enjoy them the atmosphere of the library in them.

g) Readers are generally unwilling in accepting information retrieval training but said that such training is necessary. Such training, once it has been received, generally pushed them into using library services and changed their understanding of said services.

Based on this investigating and research of readers, the author of this paper believes that the content of library marketing should include: a) Marketing of library resources. This marketing should be sufficient to show readers the type and distribution of library resources, and focus on showing digital resources to readers. Through certain channels of communication the library portal website should inform readers of what digital library resources exist. b) Marketing should inform readers of the ways and means of using library resources and introduce to readers the ways of accessing paper documents as well as digital resources, including: How to retrieve information, how to download documents, how to seek help from librarians and so on. c) A project for marketing library service. This should familiarize readers' with general circulation library services. In fact, the library offers many personalized services to readers such as: General topic search, searches based on document title, new services for technical search, online reference services for readers, special libraries

and service features, inter library loans, and so on. These services will have new meaning for readers once they are educated as to what they are and how they work. d) Marketing librarians and their job responsibilities. Librarians work in many different capacities and have many different responsibilities, but readers often have little comprehension of what these duties are, especially of the roles that general and specialized subject librarians play. Therefore librarians and their jobs should be a focus of library marketing content. e) Marketing of new resources and services. As society progresses, the needs of readers are constantly changing and library services will change with them. As a result, readers should be informed of these new library services and resources.

3.2 Strategies for Marketing Channels

Strategies for channels mean the process of library applying appropriate channels to communicate with readers. According to the environment of higher institutions of learning and the characteristics of readers, library marketing can use some of the following approaches:

a) Network communication channels. Teacher and student readers can use campus LAN to access library website. The library can push recourses, services, new resources, new service approaches, book borrowing due date reminders, etc. to readers through the official Weibo of the library, RSS information push and remind email sending.

b) Conducting readers' awareness training. University libraries should conduct training to their readers according to their own human resource, space resource and other resources. Freshmen readers are the focus of the training. At the same time, they should pay attention to the cooperation with teacher readers and fully play the role of teachers in guiding students.

c) Conducting promotion through various school newspapers and magazines. Besides the college newspaper, universities have many student newspaper associations and magazine associations. These newspapers and magazines not only are welcome among students, but also distributed to student dormitories by someone from the association. Libraries can cooperate with them and use these platforms to conduction promotion. Since newspapers are distributed throughout the whole campus, the promotion effect will be broader than other fixed-location promotion

d) Compiling library newsletter. Some university libraries have their own library newsletters, but most of university libraries don't. This is related to the library's emphasis degree. In fact, this is also an important propaganda media which can not only be used to promote the library, but also used as another users' training and guidance way (Ke & Li, 2007). Distributing library newsletters regularly to teachers is helpful to gain more potential users of the library. If it is hard to make library

newsletters, libraries can produce library use guide and manual for readers.

e) Organizing service campaign. By holding campaigns of "service week" or "service month", libraries organize cultural and artistic activities and hold lectures or reports to promote books and build the image of the library so as to attract more users to "consume" the information products and services that the library provides. If the funding permits, libraries can make gifts, such as bookmarks, pens, key chains, mouse signs and etc., tailored to promote the services of the library so as to stimulate students' interests in participating.

f) Using personnel marketing strategies. The management staffs of the circulation department, the reading department, and the consulting department have more chances to communicate with readers face to face. If they have a good communication with readers, it will attract more readers and it is beneficial to promote the library and market the library.

g) Tangible display strategy. Students often pass by the library building after they finish their classes; therefore, library marketing can consider effectively using the physical space of the library to conduct tangible display in the hallway, study rooms and other places.

3.3 Product Strategies

Products can be anything that is provided by the market to cause users' attention, acquisition, usage or consumption to meet the desires or needs (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Library marketing is also based on products and library's products include: traditional paper books, magazines, journals and digital resources (Chinese database, foreign language database, self-built special database, electronic journals, electronic books, electronic newspapers, electronic reference book, online library catalog, database navigation, journals navigation etc.), and it also includes various intangible services and service concepts that the library provides (user training, readers advisory service, technical maintenance, etc.).

The product has a certain life cycle. It will gradually enter the fading period with the influence of various factors; therefore, libraries should focus on the development of new products, continue to add new information and materials according to readers' needs, and get rid of old, outdated materials which have lost their value to meet the increasingly diverse and personal needs of readers. This is the main approach for libraries to ensure the sustainable development of the library.

The development of new products must be reader-centered. In addition to meeting the needs of current readers, the library also needs to pay attention to exploring the needs of potential readers. For example, the library can start career courses to allow college students to determine their career direction since they enter college and to manage their study and life well. This approach can stimulate college students' needs of information. The

library should provide materials that are closely related to students' study, such as computer grade examination materials, college English test materials, graduates school test counseling resources, test materials about accountants, psychologists, counselors, lawyers, supervising engineer, civil servants, etc..

3.4 Marketing Evaluation and Feedback Strategies

For universities, new college students come and student graduate every year. Library marketing needs to continue. After the library starts marketing, it needs to conduct the evaluation of the goal achievement, service promotion results, readers' satisfactory degree, etc. to analyze the problems of library marketing so as to further improve the goals and strategies of library marketing.

CONCLUSION

In the past 30 years, LISA's collection of library marketing has been increased, from which we can see that, foreign libraries have understood the importance of marketing to the operation of libraries. There are only 5 libraries in

China setting up promotion department, in which 2 libraries have set up the position of marketing. The rest 3 libraries expressed that they do have personnel involved in such work, but they have not formed a specialized position. University libraries should take service marketing as an opportunity to put marketing under their strategy planning, improve the marketing quality, adapt the marketing plans to change environment, and better serve the strategic goals of the library.

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