Library's New Role: Public Relation and Marketing of Library Services

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Introduction

Libraries have been in existence since the inception of civilization in one or the other form. Even in the ancient days various kings and social reformers of different regions always thought and strived to establish a library for the socio-cultural and economic development of their respective regions. It is observed that with the passage of time the concept of library has changed. Now a library is not considered a storehouse of the books but a knowledge-workshop. With this phenomenal transition, the role of librarian has also changed. Now the librarian is considered as an interpreter of thought contents directly affecting the academic pursuits and interests of the users. All organizations small or big regional or national, private or public always like to have a large or small library, depending on available financial and human resources. This clearly brings out that the library plays a dynamic role in confronting current socio-cultural challenges and crises.

Public Relations

Relations are the outcome of mutual understanding derived from the process of sharing common interest. Human beings want to create relationships with each other. Public Relation (PR) is an area of management. It is a twentieth century phenomenon. But traces of Public Relations were found in human societies since the very dawn of civilization. PR is as much a part of the daily life of a library as it is of any other business. To quote Harlow[1] "Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, between an organization and its publics, involves the management of problem or issues; helps management to keep informed and emphasize the responsibility of management to serve the public interest, helps management keep abreast of an effectively utilized change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools." PR is skilled communication of ideas to the various concerned publics with the objectives of achieving desired results.

PR concerns itself with the relationship between an organization and its publics on which it depends for its existence. It is a management function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with public interest. It then executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance. PR has also been defined as performance primarily to enhance prestige or goodwill of an individual or an organization.

An individual involved in PR is typically responsible for promotions, image enhancement, publicity, fund raising, public awareness, education and crisis management. It is the task of Library Public Relations to stimulate the public in an emphatic fashion to reveal resources and variety of which a library provides.

Marketing

The majority belief is that the marketing concept comprised "profit, sales and advertising" and was confined to business firms involved in production actually for profit. This concept of marketing prevaid until recently. It was seen as a relatively low status activity. Kotler & Levy broadened the concept of "service" from 'physical product' to customer satisfaction engineering from 'pushing product'.

Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services. Libraries

and information centers are in the business of acquiring, storing and retrieving various information sources. All this has been done to satisfy the needs of the users, who are the core of library and information services / products. Two reasons why marketing is important? According to Stone, with so many technological changes, libraries must work harder than ever to let their patrons know what libraries and librarians can do. Secondly, because marketing is an integral part of management and advocates involvement of all staff members in product or services development, promotion, and distribution, market-oriented staff is far more successful in responding to technological change and seeing that new services reflect the needs of the library's users."

Currently, there are 54 Central University Libraries in India. The challenge before university libraries is to make their resources available. The flow of information and use of information sources by the practicing users in the Central University Libraries in India are different from what may now exist in advanced countries like the U.K. & USA. In addition, if the Central University Libraries in India want to build a high image with users' favour, they would have to know their characteristics, background and their information needs and information uses. It has been observed that PR and marketing of information, if applied to and adopted by the Central University Libraries can help them in living up to the expectations and needs of the users community. The concept of PR and marketing of information is studied under Management Science. The librarians of university and institutions of higher learning may need to know and practice the techniques of 'PR and marketing for promoting the use of information. Since the present study is essentially exploratory in nature, it may prompt many further studies of the problem. Therefore, the results computed from field data should not be construed to be absolutely conclusive. It is observed during the field survey that Central University Libraries of Delhi are not implementing PR and marketing of information. However, it is observed that these university libraries were interested in applying PR and marketing of information in their services.

The study identifies analyses and applies PR to explore feasibility of marketing of information in university libraries. This study will add to the body of knowledge concerning international librarianship and the use of information by the university libraries. It will encourage further research in the field to conduct more studies on PR and marketing of information. In addition, the findings of this study can be used for comparative studies; the research findings can also serve as a guide for other similar studies. The study may respond to the awareness of the university libraries and its users. It is essential that university libraries should project a positive and dynamic image through motivated staff. University libraries should ensure better relations with each of the library communities and promote its use. The libraries being a service-oriented organization, the users' needs must be matched with the perception of users for effective results. Libraries must be highly regarded and seen to be integral to the aim of university of which they are the key part.

Objectives

- To understand the attitudes of university librarians towards public relation vis-à-vis marketing;
- To determine the PR and marketing of library and information services / products being practiced in university libraries;
- To examine the 'appropriateness' of application of PR and marketing concepts to the university libraries.
- To develop awareness among the university libraries that PR and marketing of information provides a clear understanding of users relations.
- To develop awareness among the university libraries that marketing of information is essential in view of budget cuts, cost inflation and induction of new Information Technology.
- To suggest suitable guidelines to improve PR and marketing of information in Central University Libraries.

Literature Review

PR is based on the relationship between organizations and the public on which it depends for its existence; it is a process of keeping people

informed about present services and future plans. Sangam and Konnur[5] describe the importance of PR activities in furthering the effectiveness of the services rendered by public libraries. He has proposed a scheme of PR activities for Karnataka Public Library System consisting of advertising and publicity, multimedia, extension and educational activities. The authors give emphasis on the need for proper PR training to the public library staff. Chandra discusses the central role played by the PR in projection of the professional image of professional library and information science staff, with particular reference to India in a paper presented at the IASLIC Conference at Calcutta.

Aitufe provides a brief survey of the PR industry and an account of the specific applications of PR to university libraries. He begins with identification of the library's aims and objectives and that of its main client bodies. He discusses the full range of PR skills, including interpersonal skills, service quality and library promotion by all means, and importance of PR in university libraries. Itoga and Kibushi recommend PR for Japanese Libraries. The authors emphasize on various topics, such as publicity skills for librarians as professionals to raise the profile of librarians as well as libraries; creating lively libraries; ensuring good relations with local assemblies; a case study of Kasuga City Library; evening and Sunday opening at Kumamoto Gakuen University Library; and identifying the audience for PR activities.

Dissing and Revy] reported in 1989 Aalborg University Library's new chief librarian set up a PR committee to improve the library's image. Courses attended by them taught them to focus on the messag, target groups, information needs and communication channels. Hallund and Revy mentioned that the Royal Library had a PR section since 1965, using press contact, exhibitions and publications and T.V. Kroning examines internal PR which are important element in the management of any organization, the one that has attracted very little response from senior management perhaps because of a lack of theoretical knowledge of the subject. He explains internal PR procedures, focusing on, conceptualization and planning; elementary principles; possible approaches; and the means of communicating internal PR activities. The author offers an example of a public relations campaign for a fictional metropolitan library system.

Hurst discusses the importance of PR in the promotion of library services without spending a great deal of time and money in the process. He considers the question of targeting the public, media coverage, press relations and other means of publishing library services. Lifer and Rogers report on a meeting held on 21 October 1995 in Cincinnati, Ohio, to organize a group called Family Friendly Libraries (FFL) and discuss family values' issues and libraries. They note the hostility of the group towards the American Library Association (ALA) and its attempts to set itself up in opposition to it and to its Library Bill of Rights. They report on a number of the speeches at the meeting and give advice to librarians on dealing with the FFL.

Bingham reported that, in 1995 the American Library Association introduced a media and speaking campaign to convey the urgency and scope of the public's need for information and for libraries that can satisfy those needs. Advocacy is the act of pleading for or supporting a change in an existing system, which will produce results that are permanent and will benefit future users of the system. It lists 12 principles of advocacy, describes qualities of a successful advocate, and presents general guidelines for effective advocacy in support of libraries.

Jackson] presented a paper at the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers Seminar on "How to Manage Public Relations" in London, (UK) on 21 February, 1995 looks at what the PR specialist offers to an organization. He describes their skill and discusses what can be learnt from those who don't have it right. Some definitions of common terms, such as PR and image are offered with some simple rules to remember. He relates experience of PR at the British Library in using communication as a bridge between actuality and image.

Wettmann reveals that at Archivschule Marburg a new training concept in archival PR has been developed. The Archivschule considers PR as a part of archival work, but as practiced in most archives, the meaning of the term and the importance of this field of work in relation to the

traditional tasks of archives is not clearly defined. The course, therefore, offers an introduction to the different forms, methods and aims of PR and supports a constructive but also critical attitude towards the subject. The course, which consists of 52 lessons, deals with topics, such as archival-guided tours, communication with users, cooperation with schools, further education programmes, cooperation with the media, archival publications and exhibitions. The Archivschule also offers a course in PR as part of its further education programme.

Sejkova explains the PR work of Svidnik District Library aimed at promoting the services provided within the framework of a newly introduced mobile library scheme. He discusses the implementation of the PR plan, which included measures aimed at establishing links with external institutions as well as measures aimed at improving internal communications. The implementation included the use of personal contacts and the media as well as a range of promotional material and special activities. Reports on a 5 day library science course held by Danish Library Science Institute in Copenhagen in October 1993, focusing on image and marketing of librarians and libraries and their services. The course stressed on the quality of library personnel.

'Research indicates that service is valued more highly by the clients than quality of the collection and librarians must actively market their services and cultivate a positive self-image emphasizing their professional skills. The author draws attention to employment of PR librarians in Sweden.

Crocker[] mentioned PR in libraries is often viewed as a tertiary, nonessential peripheral to the primary mission of the academic library. What many people do not realize is that PR exists with or without conscious intervention and can be positive, negative or neutral. The final report of the Special Committee on Public Relations, American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) held in April 1992 examines the crisis in law librarianship, which involves increasing financial pressure in academic, public and private spheres. In May 1990, a Special Committee on Public Relations was appointed to coordinate all PR efforts of the Association with the support of the AALL headquarters staff. Final report on the committee's work provides assessment of current headquarters activity, the nature of PR programmes of similar professional groups, the needs and wishes expressed at AALL's grass roots level and findings on possible sources of PR support.[]

Klinder[] examines that more and more libraries are employing management strategies such as non-profit marketing and promotion in order to increase their profile and to better serve the needs of users. He discusses development of the concept of Corporate Identity (CI), which appears to have a positive impact on working conditions. He examines use of a CI component in public libraries. Jaillet reveals that in the past, librarians have not mastered political and public relations' skills to create and maintain a positive image of their own importance. More aggressive players bypass the library and claim the output as their own, depriving the information centre its due credit. He discusses how to make the system work to obtain a higher profile, offering advice on whom to contact to raise the library's status and involve senior members of staff.

Cadilova examines the origins of PR and claims that PR can be defined as a drive aimed at creating an atmosphere of trust between a company and the public. As a system, PR consists of the following elements: Corporate Identity (CI), Corporate Culture (CC) and Corporate Design (CD), which are used to create Corporate Image. The author discusses application of PR techniques in libraries. Tamrhein and Sorkin port how the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) launched a PR campaign during 1992-93 to win university community and legislative support for a new academic library building. The academic year was proclaimed "Year of the Library" and the UNLV, Friends of the Library Group, and the University Library Society planned a series of events with the participation of groups outside the library to call greater attention to the library's needs. These included: receptions; fundraising parties; selling library T-shirts, book bags and pins; lectures; weekly book sales; television, radio and speaking

appearances; and mailing of brochures on "Year of the Library" events.

Belbenoit-Avich[I] stresses on the importance of promotion for university libraries. An important market exists in the field of document delivery and librarians can play a considerable side in it. Other tasks which may be undertaken by libraries to attract funds and build up their collections, include bibliographic searches and information and reference services. He feels the importance of training sessions for students, and the need for a trained and motivated staff. Nuckolls reveals that the automation process is very important to keep the human factor in mind at all times. People who are computer-shy need to be informed and kept informed; about each step the library takes on the road to automation. It is vital not only to communicate often with the staff as each goal is reached, but also to keep the public informed as well. Users, who know what to expect from the system chosen, will be able to use the system to their advantage. There are various steps that can be taken to alleviate fear and uncertainty about the future.

Marketing of Library Services

Marketing is a management function. It is applicable to both profit and non-profit organizations. However, a distinction should be made between marketing and selling. While marketing is primarily to create demand, selling is to meet the demand by suitable products and services. Libraries are increasingly coming under pressure from their management to generate funds. Responding to the requirements, the libraries are re-examining their roles and evolving new strategies for taking up information marketing as one of their functions.

Tanui stresses that it is essential to market library services if they are to be used effectively but there are various internal and external constraints; he examine these constraints in the light of attempts to market the library service of MOI University in Kenya; tackles issues relating to the motivation of staff and students to use the library. Cleary and Linklater[35] identifies a new role for academic libraries in the marketing and instructional support of the Australian Academic and Research Network (AARNet). They outline how the University of Newcastle Libraries, with the agreement of the University Computing Service, developed a training programme, using special project staff financed from research infrastructure funding. The strong response from faculty has ensured the future of the programme and confirmed the conviction that libraries have a future in the promotion and user support of new technologies.

Pienaar observed that in university library management, personnel have the opportunity through strategic marketing planning, to contribute the adaptation efforts of the student towards the prerequisites for erudition. The latter consists of an analysis of the marketing environment; resource analysis; formulation of mission and objectives; formulation of strategy and organization structuring and systems design. The formulation and implementation of marketing strategy is required specifically due to the existence of short-term objectives.

The marketing mix consists of the services being offered, their probable prices (if any), as well as the places where certain services can be utilized and the way in which students, amongst other users can be informed about the existence of these services. Rambhujun[37] evaluates two studies of users' needs and behaviour in 1978-79 and 1980-81. The responses in both cases indicated a high level (over 50%) of dissatisfaction with services, low use and general lack of knowledge about the library and its resources, mainly because of lack of communication between users and library staff. The main problem emerged as failure of services. The solution accordingly lies in better co-operation between library staff and users, teaching staff and other libraries within the university.

Pearson gives outlines of underlying principles of marketing of on-line information retrieval services. Stressed, marketing is a managerial process that includes planning, organizing, administration and directing, and control. He suggests planning processes and marketing strategies and points out methods and difficulties in evaluating the marketing programme. Chikkamallaiah and Sridhar reports that the IDRC Project on "Marketing Survey of Information Products/Services" conducted by IIM has revealed that there is a potential demand for

priced information service/products. This was confirmed again in 1994 in an IDRC sponsored workshop on 'Development of Marketing Manual for Librarians and Information Scientists' conducted at IIM, Ahmedabad.

Gopinath[mentions that professional adopters of information economics should explore the problems of products, costing and pricing and marketing through commercial agents and incorporate their impacts in the library operations. Library profession should adopt analytical techniques with commercial techniques. These techniques are to be dovetailed with data flow in all of the libraries. This focus should be built in all professional work in flow of events such as information processes, procedures, and service-targets towards achieving resource generation for sustenance. While suggesting the importance of information marketing, Rao and Chary revealed that 'since the profit portion of information services is still in its beginning stages, it is fair to state that a sincere approach to marketing is a must in the information world as it is itself becoming very competitive in an increasingly competitive world. It would be very useful if library schools emphasize on marketing aspects in their academic programmes to achieve better results.'

Conclusion

Public relations and marketing or information have become very important because of greater university-industry interaction. This phenomenon cannot be realized unless the university libraries become active to apply Public Relations and Marketing of Library & Information Services. It will ultimately help university libraries in general to create an environment for industrial-interaction more physically visible. Experience shows that librarians in the past have always remained preoccupied with clerical and administrative work. However, against this some of the foreign scholars and library scientists have deliberated, at various professional platforms, journals and publications on application of Public Relation (PR) in libraries But which doing so, they have given a very generalized picture in one or the other form, which do not have much relevance to Indian environment. The libraries discussed in their studies are quite advanced, having all sorts of applications of new information technology.

However, in our case, some libraries, like INSDOC and IITs, have gone ahead to apply the new information technology in the real sense due to their strong technical and financial backing. Library Public Relations (LPR) are a total management approach which ensures exposure to the wider clientele, a fair usage of the facilities, services and products of university libraries. Marketing of information is characterized by the belief that information users can be motivated to use any product if they are exposed to their products or services extensively. Most librarians now recognize that 'customers' must be made aware of the range of available products and services and must further be made to feel that such offerings are worthwhile.

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