

# **Marching Beyond Libraries**

## *Role of Social Media and Networking*

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**Overseas Press India Pvt. Ltd.**



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# MARKETING OF INFORMATION PRODUCTS AND SERVICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA: THE USE OF ELECTRONIC AND NON-ELECTRONIC TOOLS

—Opara Genevieve Chinedu & Nwaohiri Ngozi Maria

**ABSTRACT:** An academic library is the hub around which all academic activities revolve. One of its mandates is the transmission of existing knowledge. This cannot be realized except the information is packaged through appropriate channels to their desired users. This study centered on how to market information products and services in academic libraries using electronic and non-electronic tools. Ten respondents were selected from each of five university libraries in South East Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted. Data obtained from administered questionnaire were analyzed using bar and pie charts while descriptive statistics was used to interpret the data. Findings revealed an increase to a high extent in the value of academic libraries/librarians, awareness created on library information products and services for optimum use, collaboration and interaction between information providers and patrons achieved. Some challenges were observed and feasible solutions suggested.

## INTRODUCTION

The advent of information technology in libraries and information centers have consequently led to acquisition of reading materials which consisting of books, journals prints and electronics, databases, films, images, manuscripts, Audio visual materials etc. These information resources are packed with knowledge by eminent writers and personalities.

Marketing information products and services is necessitated by the need to promote the use of available information resources and services, to create awareness among users, optimize the use of information within limited resources and manpower especially in libraries that are challenged by budget cuts, improve the image of libraries thereby making the information seeker to always think first of the library whenever an information need arises. Based on these facts, Parameswari (2002) sees information explosion, the technology revolution and escalating library costs as summons on the library profession to develop a marketing approach in its operations and services.

Libraries and information centers have begun to realize that marketing of information products and services is an integral part of administration, especially as a means for improving user satisfaction and promoting user services by current and potential users. Hence, information technology and other non-electronic tools at this point, play crucial role in the marketing of library and information products and services.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Libraries, in the pool of information explosion occasioned by information technology source, subscribe and acquire vast amount of information resources even with the biting library budget cuts. In recent times, academic libraries invest huge amount of money to acquire reading materials, subscribe to periodicals and online databases to satisfy the information needs of their students, faculty members and research scholars. Unless these information seekers and users are made aware of these resources and services in the library, their use cannot be maximized. Ina and Liezi (2012) observed that libraries subscribe to these products and services, investing substantial amounts and need to get their users (and non-users) to exploit them to their fullest potential. A



university library, well equipped with all the needful library and information resources and services with its resources and services not duly promoted cannot maintain its relevance in this 21st century.

Based on these problems, this study therefore seeks to examine ways librarians in academic libraries can use electronic (social media) and non-electronic tools to market libraries' information products and services especially in Nigeria.

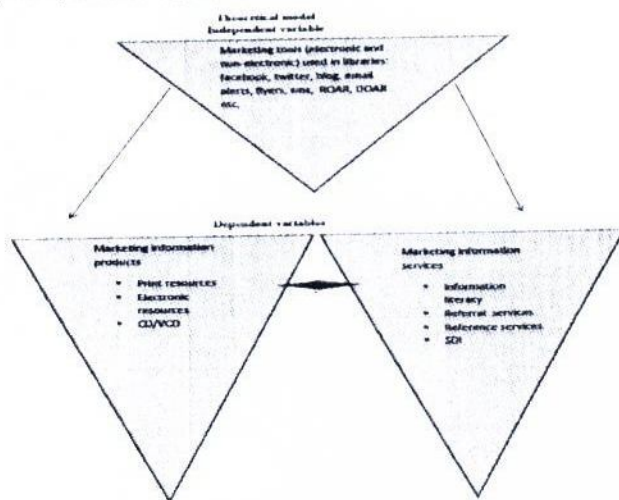
## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were raised to guide this research;

1. What types of electronic tools and non-electronic tools do librarians in academic libraries use to market information products and services?
2. What are the benefits derived from the use of electronic tools and non-electronic tools by librarians in marketing library information products and services?
3. What are the challenges librarians in academic libraries face using these tools for marketing library information products and services.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of making students, faculty members and research scholars aware of the information products and services and their usage by academic libraries is a fact that cannot be undermined. In fact, low utilization of information products and services in academic libraries can result in the cancellation of high-quality products (Dugan; 2011). F Kaur and Rani (2007) emphasize that "University libraries invest so much on collection development, processing and storing information resources. These resources, which are so expensive, often remain unutilized resulting in wastage of money, time, energy and space". Pranita and Pradhan (2014) observed that academic libraries have all types of collections which should be promoted through marketing. Therefore, the prime task of libraries and information centers should be to market these resources. A model of marketing is depicted in figure 1.



**Figure 1. A self designed model of librarians' use of electronic and non-electronic tools to market library information products and services**

The theoretical model brings to light how the variables of this study interact with one another. The independent variable being the marketing tools (electronic and non-electronic) used in libraries,

while the dependent is marketing of library information products and services using electronic and non-electronic tools.

## CONCEPT OF MARKETING

Looking at the term, 'marketing', Kaur and Rani (2007) state that, "the libraries can solve their problem of underutilization of resources and services by applying marketing principles". Broadly, the American Marketing Association (2013), define marketing as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large". Marketing, from the view of information products and services in academic libraries, is the use of strategies, techniques and tools by academic libraries to: identify its target users and their particular needs; inform their users what they have and do; ensure that the right information gets to the user at the right time in the appropriate medium and to achieve the maximum use of information products and services.

Marketing of information products and services is defined by Pandya (nd) as the "systematic plan that focuses on development of products, place or mode of delivery, adjustment of price to the market and promotion to specially targeted groups of the library market". Be that as it may, information products to be marketed in academic libraries include: books, journals, newspapers, maps, internet based resources, CV and VCD while services are lending, referral and reference service, indexing, abstracting, information literacy and selective dissemination of information (SDI).

## TOOLS USED IN MARKETING LIBRARY INFORMATION PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Ashrafi-rizi and Kazempour (2012) state that, "as the people and organizations are different in their needs and financial levels, so the information is disseminated via different methods. These methods, regarding to their media and resources are - electronic and printed methods".

### ELECTRONIC TOOLS

**SMS:** Academic libraries with the dedicated real time mobile phone (s) send out short automated SMS alerting students, faculty members and research scholars of existing information products and services available, updates on new ones.

**E-mail alert:** Will be sent to all the faculty members, students and other targeted audience whenever there is an update on information products and services in the library. The e-mail will be automated such that every staff and student become aware of every update on any newly acquired resources and newly introduced services. This will be done as often as resources are acquired and services introduced.

**Registering with ROAR, DOAR:** The library registers with international directories-harvesters (OAISTER, OpenDOAR, ROAR). It is on this platform that researchers worldwide would be able to gain access to the repositories of academic libraries on a daily basis.

**Facebook:** is a platform that enables interactions between users. Academic libraries on creating Facebook page invite students, faculty members and researchers to follow them on Facebook page for scholarly interactions.

One of the primary uses of Facebook by academic libraries is to promote the library with a library homepage. Libraries advertise hours, locations, website information, newly acquired materials, (print and non-print) etc on Facebook. Fakas (2007) notes that by linking to the library's website, the Facebook page acts as a portal to the library. Wan (2011) adds that university libraries can use



Facebook to provide updates on library services such as new reference services, document delivery, research supports etc.

**Blogs:** Gunelius (2014) defines blogs as "one of the oldest social media channels. A blog (also called a weblog or web log) is a website consisting of entries (also called posts) appearing in reverse chronological order with the most recent entry appearing first (similar in format) to a daily journal". Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe blog as "the social media-equivalent of personal WebPages and can come in a multitude of different variations from personal diaries describing the author's life to summaries of all relevant information in one specific content area".

A blog can be used for promoting library and information resources and services. It can be used in a library for outreach, dissemination of information like upcoming public lecture in the university, building library image, internal and external communications, create awareness on new arrivals in terms of products and services and most importantly for marketing. Librarians can periodically post messages, share information on a particular subject or issues both in the institutions and government and allow users to comment or contribute to the content, articles on thought provoking issues can be posted and expect instant reactions, (Ezeani and Igwesi, 2012).

**Twitter:** is all about messaging service, whether it uses a cell phone, instant messenger, such as Yahoo Messenger or MSN Messenger, or through specific websites. Librarians in Nigeria can use this platform to give users firsthand information on newly acquired information products and innovations in libraries. Users can send instant messages (IM) on complaints or ask questions on a particular issue and get a feedback on the spot using twitter (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2012). University libraries use Twitter accounts to notify users of new relevant items from collection and events.

## NON-ELECTRONIC TOOLS

**Flyers:** will contain brief explanation on the reference services such as the OPAC, SDI, available in the library as well as the databases, electronic resources and their user identity/passwords for access. These flyers will be distributed to the faculties/schools, departments for staff and students use.

**Faculty/board meetings:** Mentioning the available information products and services at all faculty orientations and information literacy, and also at faculty/board meetings.

**Word-of-mouth:** With this, the embedded librarian of each school or faculty interacts, perhaps weekly, with members of the faculty to unearth their information needs, create awareness on the benefits of using the resources and services available in academic libraries.

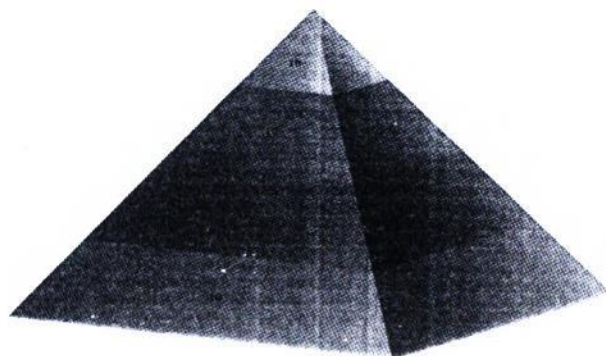
## RESEARCH METHOD

This work adopted the survey method. Literature related to the research topic from different search engines and web sites were reviewed. Questionnaire was developed and used to elicit data from the research subjects who are professional and para-professional librarians from four academic libraries in South-East Nigeria. Data were analyzed using bar and pie charts while descriptive statistics were used to interpret the data. The data collected from field was used to answer the formulated research questions.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Respondents' Institution

This study covered forty respondents. Ten each were from each of the participating institutions namely: Abia State University library, Uturu (ABSU), Federal University of Technology library, Owerri (FUTO), NnamdiAzikiwe University library, Awka (NAU) and University of Nigeria library, Nsukka (UNN), all from the South-East of Nigeria.



**Research Question 1:** What types of electronic tools and non-electronic tools do librarians in academic libraries in South-East Nigerian use to market information products and services?

**Table 1.** electronic and non-electronic tools used by librarians in academic libraries in South-East Nigeria to market information products and services

Types of Marketing Tools	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Undecided		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
SMS	15	37.5%	25	62.5%							40	100%
E-mail alert	35	87.5%	5	12.5%							40	100%
ROAR, DOAR	5	12.5%	23	57.5%	3	7.5%			9	22.5	40	100%
Facebook	16	40%	24	60%							40	100%
Blog	31	77.5%	9	22.5%							40	100%
Twitter	27	67.5%	13	32.5%							40	100%
Flyers	11	27.5%	29	72.5%							40	100%
Faculty/Board Meeting	33	82.5%	7	17.5%							40	100%
Word of-mouth	17	42.5%	23	57.5%							40	100%

Data gathered for this work shows that all the various electronic and non-electronic tools available for marketing information products and services in academic libraries in South-East Nigeria, are very much in use with the exception of ROAR and DOAR which are low in usage. This finding buttresses the statement by Pandya (nd) that "A blend of both the E-marketing and Traditional marketing should be undertaken to promote information product and services of the library".



**Research Question 2:** What are the benefits derived from librarians' use of electronic and non-electronic tools to market information products and services in academic libraries?

**Table 2. Benefits derived from the use of electronic and non-electronic tools for marketing information resources and services in academic libraries**

Benefits derived	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Undecided		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Increases library users	12	30%	28	70%							40	100%
Facilitates optimum use of information resources and services	9	22.5%	31	77.5%							40	100%
Increases the value of academic libraries/librarians	15	37.5%	25	62.5%							40	100%
Enhances the achievement of increasing reader support in academic libraries	6	15%	34	85%							40	100%
Creates awareness of the use of information technology systems in library services	11	27.5%	29	72.5%							40	100%
Creates forum for marketing use of information products and services in academic libraries	27	67.5%	13	32.5%							40	100%
Enables collaboration and interactions	5	12.5%	35	87.5%							40	100%

The Table above reveals that many benefits are derived when electronic and non-electronic tools are used to market information products and services in academic libraries. Among which is creating forum for marketing of use of information products and services in academic libraries. Thus, Ashrafi-rizi and Kazempour (2012) opine that "Promotion usually leads the product toward the customers and involves the solutions which inform target groups about the presented services and available goods by the libraries".



**Research Question 3:** What are the challenges librarians in academic libraries face in the use of these tools for marketing library information products and services?

**Table 3. challenges librarians in academic libraries face in the use of these tools for marketing library information products and services**

Challenges	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Undecided		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Epileptic power supply	23	57.5%	17	42.5%							40	100%
Lack of fund	20	50%	20	50%							40	100%
Network problem	10	25%	30	75%							40	100%
Lack of IT skills on the part of students, faculty members and some librarians			15	37.5%	25	62.5%					40	100%

Having taken cognizance of the challenges that hinder the use of electronic and non-electronic tools for marketing information products and services in academic libraries in Nigeria, it is pertinent for librarians to note that the benefits outweighs the challenges.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this work, the study concludes that, the use of electronic and non-electronic tools to market information products and services has increased the value of academic libraries/librarians, created awareness of library information products and services for optimum use, collaboration and interaction between information providers and patrons have been achieved to a high extent. However, challenges such as inadequate power supply and network problems should be critically looked into to avoid wastage of money and efforts invested in acquiring information products and services in academic libraries.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study comes out with the following two key recommendations:

- Library management should put in a little more effort to improve on the power supply and network lapses for maximum utilization of the available resources; and
- Faculty members are encouraged to queue in and engage their students in projects that will link them to accessing information products and services.

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