

# Marketing of Academic Library Services for Effective Service Delivery in Delta State University Library

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## Abstract

This research work examined the Marketing of Academic Library Services for Effective Service Delivery in Delta State University Library comprising of the three campuses (Abraka, Anwai and Oleh) of the Institution. In order to do justice to this research work, the researcher examined various definitions of marketing as proposed by renowned and seasoned professionals in the field of Marketing and Librarianship. This research work also examined marketing functions/strategies or activities that enables academic librarians to achieve an effective service delivery. This work made use of the descriptive survey research design based on its objectivity, completeness of coverage and its provision of a sound basis for efficiency and accuracy in decision making. Also this research work highlights the various services rendered by Delta State University Library, the extent of marketing of its services, channels used in marketing of its services, benefits associated with marketing of its services and the challenges encountered by librarians of Delta State University Library when marketing its services. The research work also analyzed, discussed and drew conclusion and recommendations on the possible ways of marketing academic library services for an effective service delivery.

## Introduction

Librarians always view the issue of marketing as a set of techniques and strategies that pertains to administrators outside the library profession. As librarians, we unknowingly engage in marketing of library services, because the main objective of the library is to attain self-sufficiency in their resources and to provide an optimum level of services in order to reach more potential library users and also to encourage the use of library information resources. This major objective of the library naturally requires a shift from product or service oriented approach to a customer or need oriented approach. Though, marketing has a variety of definitions, the American Marketing Association's definition as cited by Kotler (2000) appears appropriate in our context. This definition views marketing as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals. This view of marketing leads us to consider issues crucial to marketing of library services, such as:

1. Appropriate methods for planning and designing of marketing programs.
2. The need to meet the objectives of the organization.
3. The importance of target markets.
4. The nature of price-setting.
5. Communication and distribution (Okogwu, 2006).

The U.K Chartered Institute of Marketing, sees marketing as the management process which helps to identify, anticipate and supply customers' requirements, efficiently. Marketing is a repetitive process and a systematic approach for matching services and products to the users' needs and desires (Kavulya, 2004). Marketing is also seen as the process of determining the needs and wants of consumers and measures put in place to deliver products or services that satisfy the needs and wants of the consumers.

The main reason for marketing is to find out what the users of the product want, setting out and making plans on how to satisfy and meet these needs. The satisfaction of the library users, who are the consumers of information resources that are acquired, processed, organized and stored in the library, are always on the mind of librarians whenever they are making decisions that have to do with library activities. However, librarians carry out need assessment services to ascertain library users' needs and how the services rendered by the library have met these needs. In order to ensure effective service delivery, librarians have put in place measures to find out the actual information needs of the library users via strategies and techniques embedded in marketing and different services rendered by the library. These services are provided to satisfy the information, educational, research, recreational and cultural needs of the library users and parent organization. These library services could be either directly via contact with the library user(S) or indirectly via behind the scene activities carried out by the librarians. These services include, cataloguing services, classification services, circulation services, reservation services, renewal services, new arrivals services, current content services, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information services, abstracting and indexing services, reference services, document delivery services, inter-library loan services, CD-ROM databases services, online access to library catalogue services, internally published newsletters services, reports and journals services, bibliographic services, etc (Webology, 2008).

The need for academic librarians to engage in marketing of library services in order to ensure effective

service delivery is not a strange or a new phenomenon in library profession. It is as old as modern librarianship and it dates back to 1970s (Renborg, 1997). The ideas of library experts such as Melvil Dewey, S.R. Ranganathan etc. are purely market oriented. The five laws of library science as propagated by Ranganathan are market oriented in nature because it has the library users as its focal point which also corresponds with the major reason for marketing any products or services. These laws state as follows: (Ranganathan, 1988)

1. Books are for use
2. Every reader his/her book
3. Every book its user
4. Save the time of the library user and
5. A library is a growing organism

The concept of marketing library and information services emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s when studies of user requirements started to be taken more seriously. Before that, services were professionally determined and system-led rather than customer driven. Other studies revealing the concept of marketing in library profession include that of Freeman and Katz (1978), Tucci (1988), Bass, Bridges and Mogan (2000), Cox (2002), Besant and Sharp (2002), Dworkin (2003).

### Research Questions

In conducting this study, the researcher has put up the following research questions:

1. What are the various library services rendered by Delta State University Library?
2. To what extent does Delta State University Library engage in marketing of its services?
3. What are the various channels used in marketing its service?
4. What are the benefits of marketing library services?

What are the challenges encountered by the library in marketing its services?

### Objective of the study

This study on Marketing of Academic Library Services in Delta State University Library is set to achieve:

1. The different library services rendered by Delta State University Library.
2. The extent to which Delta State University Library engage in marketing of its services.
3. The various channels used in marketing its services.
4. The benefits of marketing library services and
5. The different challenges encountered by the library in marketing its services

### Review of Related Literature

Marketing of library services is not an easy task as marketing of tangible goods or products. This is because services rendered cannot be returned by an unsatisfied library user as in the case of a consumer of a product, and an unsatisfied library user may decide to look for an alternative means of getting his/her information. Jestin and Parameswari (2002) opined that the increasingly important role of information has resulted in varieties of services rendered by the library in order to meet the ever changing needs of library users. They stressed the idea that modern library services must be based on the modern concept of marketing to achieve library users' satisfaction and to nurture a culture of customer service in order to boost the library's image in the eyes of the users. The American Marketing Association (2007) provides a comprehensive definition of marketing as the series of activities, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging of offering that have values for customers, clients, partners and the society at large. Marketing is management process that includes: a market plan, market research, market segmentation, market mix etc Graves and Wulff (1990) and Kotler (2000).

Below are some of the marketing functions/strategies or activities that would enable academic librarians to achieve an effective service delivery as suggested by Tucci (1988), Jestin and Parameswari (2002), American Marketing Association (2007), Graves and Wulff (1990) and kotler (1994).

1. Market research.
2. Market plan.
3. Market objectives and strategies.
4. Market mix
5. Marketing medium/advertisement
6. Message.
7. Evaluation.

**Market research:** Market research has to do with a systematic approach towards finding out what the user of the library wants and putting in place measures to fulfill the information needs. Market research is a systematic gathering and interpretation of information about individuals or organization using statistical and analytical methods and techniques of the applied social sciences to gain insight or support in decision making (McQuarrie,

2005). Market research can be done by reviewing internal library users' data in the library and also by taking statistics of users of materials checked by students such as user type( lecturers or students), date of entry, material consulted, etc (Koontz, 2005). Market research will help to provide academic librarians with relevant, accurate, reliable, valid, and current information about library users' information needs and as such reduce the uncertainty in decision making process of marketing and to control and monitor the performance of marketing activities and helping to fine tune the goals, objectives and contributions of the library to its parent organization.

**Market plan:** The data gathered from the market research is the basis upon which the market plan is rooted. The market plan outlines the library goals and objectives and figure out how it can be achieved.

Marketing of any product or services is made possible when a coordinated, controlled and effective market plan is in place. In creating a marketing plan, a library must concentrate on the library's mission analysis, resource analysis, strategic planning and monitoring, and evaluation of the task performed (Graves & Wulff 1990)

**Market objectives and strategies:** Once the library users' information needs have been known and a controlled and implementable plan is in place to meet these needs. The next plan of action is for the librarian to sharpen the library's goals and objectives in line with the users' information needs, the resources needed (human and material), the period of time needed in achieving the objectives and the strategies required in achieving them. The objectives should be simple, clear and quantifiable so that it can be evaluated to know the progress made so far. Also a good strategy that has the library user as its focus should be put in place. The strategy should incorporate vital elements such as the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the library and also it should identify Critical Success Factors (CSF) McNicol(2005). A sound marketing strategy sees the library users as the first point of call rather than the finishing point and a shift from products and services orientation to customers and needs orientation (Kavulya, 2004).

**Market mix:** the market mix is a guide for the development, implementation and evaluation of any marketing structure of products or services (Kavulya, 2004). It is a set of formulated 4ps that helps in achieving a pragmatic marketing structure. These 4ps include the following:

1. Product/service- a solution to a library users' information needs.
2. Promotion- communication channel (Inward and outward flow of information).
3. Price- value for services rendered to library users.
4. Place- access to information by library users irrespective of their location (Koontz & Rockwood, 2001).

**Marketing medium/advertisement:** This is the medium via which the library users can be reached. Campbell (2004) asserted that libraries as an agency of communication must communicate its services to the library users via print and electronic media. The choice of the channel will depend on the nature of the targeted audience and the one that is likely used. There are various channels of communication such as personal contact, e-mail, internet, telephone, newsletters and leaflets, radio, television, etc which can be used to pass marketing information to the library users to acquaint them of the various services rendered by the library and also to get feedback from them in order to know if the library is meeting up to their expectations. Carrington (2005) observed that one of the problems or deficiency in library services is that they are not properly communicated to library users. He therefore recommended advertisement of library services via news bulletin, posters, newspapers, memos, circulars and bill board. Feria (2000) opined that promotional activities and advertisement of library and its services are means via which success can be achieved in service marketing , but not as important as measuring the customer satisfaction and ability to keep customers.

**Message:** Once the channel of communication has been selected, there is need to consider how the message should be structured in order to yield the required results. A good message should be straight to the point, relevant, worthwhile, compelling, and able to move the reader to action. This can be done using the 4cs model, which stands for comprehension, connection, credibility, and contagiousness (Isabelle, 2007). The message should be clear, simple, straight forward and captivating.

**Evaluation:** Evaluation is a way of determining how an initiative has been worthwhile in terms of delivering what was intended and expected. Evaluation as defined by the American Evaluation Association, as involving the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of programs, policies, personnel, products, and organizations to improve their effectiveness. Evaluation could be process based, outcome based and impact based. Evaluating the marketing of library services helps to determine how far the goals and objectives of the library are achieved and the areas that needed adjustment and improvement.

The concept of marketing in academic libraries is often misunderstood. Many people associate marketing with profit motives or see it as the buying and selling of tangible goods (Okogwu, 2006). While these views are not completely wrong, they do not reflect the broad nature of marketing. Olson and Moseman (1997) and Okogwu (2006) are of the opinion that marketing includes determining market niches, defining products and services, setting prices, promoting services, and building good public relations. In the academic library setting, marketing library services entails understanding the objectives of the library, researching the needs of the target market, packaging the library and its services to meet these needs, then promotion of the library and its services to attract the target market, and finally, pricing. It is important that libraries should first create a clear vision of

their values, their contributions to the university, its faculty, staff and students, and to society as a whole. To do this, libraries must first define their mission and objectives, increase their customer focus, and provide quality management and effective and efficient service (Nkanga, 1999).

The library is successful only when the library users use the information resources that are housed in the library. This is made possible when the users are satisfied with the services rendered by the library. For the library to succeed there is the need to create awareness on the users, about the importance of the services rendered by the library through a successful marketing campaign on library services. Marketing of library services is not all about the library services alone; it also involves the creation of awareness of the existence of the library, keeping the library users informed about the resources and services that conform with their information needs, the ability to manage the library resources (human and material) effectively, the commitment to users' satisfaction and understanding of the users' information needs better (Noel & Waugh, 2002).

Rebranding of library to make it marketable requires a lot of funds. Funds are most times inadequate to meet the library monetary needs especially in government owned libraries in Nigeria (Aguolo, 1996). This of course, has disrupted the professional library services and also frustrated marketing strategies put in place by librarians. Most government owned libraries in Nigeria cannot compete with other information centers due to lack of funds, poor infrastructures, low morale among librarians, lack of modern skills as a result of ill training and lack of quality learning facilities (McArthur Foundation, 2005). Marketing of library services is a huge task due to the mind-set of students and faculties who sees the library as weak and unable to support research (McArthur Foundation, 2005). Another problem associated with marketing of library services is the lack of business expertise on the part of librarians (Jestin & Parameswari, 2002). Thus, librarians rely solely on the traditional system of acquisition, cataloguing, classification, shelving and dissemination of information; and thereafter, wait for the library users to come and consult the information resources, instead of taking the bold step of reaching out to the users through a professional marketing of library services.

### Research Methodology

This study is meant to elicit response from a group of respondents on Marketing of Academic Library Services for Effective Service Delivery, which is a phenomenon the researcher believes had already occurred. A descriptive survey research design was chosen because it is a research design that helps to describe and collect data from the respondents without the researcher manipulating the data to suit his/her own opinion. A descriptive survey research design is based on objectivity, completeness of coverage and its provision of a sound basis for efficiency and accuracy in decision making.

The population of this study comprises of professional staff, para-professional staff, and non-professional/supportive staff drawn from the three campuses of Delta State University, which are Abraka, Anwai and Oleh campus of the institution.

Questionnaire was used as the only instrument for data collection, and it was titled Marketing of Academic Library Services for Effective Service Delivery ( MALSESD ). It was made up of 6 sections (section A-F).

### Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Rate of response

Total number of questionnaire administered	Total number of questionnaires returned	Percentage
Abraka campus 10	10	33.3
Anwai campus 10	10	33.3
Oleh campus 10	10	33.3

Table 1 shows the even distribution of questionnaire among the 3 campuses of Delta State University library which are Abraka, Anwai and Oleh campus with each campus getting 10 questionnaire that are administered under the close supervision of the researcher.

Table 2: Sex of the respondents

Sex	Responses	Percentage
Male	21	70
Female	8	30
Total	30	100

From the analysis of table 2 that represents the sex of the respondents, it is obtained that 21 librarians representing 70% of the respondents are male while 9 librarians representing 30% of the respondents are female. This clearly shows that there are more of male respondents than their female counterpart on this research work.

Table 3: What are the various library services rendered by Delta State University library?

Services rendered	Responses	Percentage
Cataloguing services	30	100
Classification services	30	100
Circulation services	28	93.3
Reservation services	28	93.3
Renewal services	21	70
New arrival services	22	73.3
Current content services	12	40
Current awareness services	17	56.6
Selective dissemination of information	17	56.6
Abstracting and indexing services	23	76.6
Reference services	26	86.6
Document delivery services	14	46.6
Inter-library loan services	14	46.6
CD-ROM database services	15	50
Online access to library catalogue services	19	63.3
Internally published newsletters services	15	50
Reports and journals services	19	63.3
Bibliographic services	21	70

The data on table 3 shows the services rendered in Delta State University library. This clearly shows that the library renders different services in order to satisfy the users' information needs and to assist the institution in research works through technical services (Behind the scene services) and direct services to library users through one on one contact with the user(s) seeking for information. This service oriented approach adopted by librarians of Delta State University library is in tone with the need to market the library services through different activities carried out by the librarians in order to meet the information needs of the user(s).

Table 4: To what extent does Delta State University library engage in marketing of its services?

Extent of marketing library services	Responses	Percentage
Partially	20	66.6
Comprehensively	8	26.6

Table 4 representing the extent to which Delta State University library engage in marketing of its services, shows that it is still at its initiation stage with 20 respondents representing 66.6% are of the opinion that the library partially engages in marketing of its services while 8 respondents representing 26.6% having an antagonizing opinion as to full marketing of its services.

Table 5: What are the various channels used in marketing its services?

Channels of marketing library services	Responses	Percentage
Personal contact	28	93.3
e-mail	17	56.6
Internet	22	73.3
Telephone	12	40
Newsletter and leaflets	13	43.3
Radio	3	10
Television	3	10
Organization of pep talks	14	46.6
Freshers' orientation	25	83.3
Library service opinion poll	9	30

Table 5 showing the channels used in marketing library services in Delta State University library. This table clearly shows that efforts are being made by the library in order to market its services to the library users through the organization of orientation programme, personal or one on one contact with the users, pep talks, use of e-mail services in sending response to the library user(s) on query made through same medium, internet services, opinion polls organized by the library etc. These are some of the means of marketing its services in order to ensure an effective and efficient service delivery.



Table 6: What are the benefits of marketing library services?

Benefit of marketing library services	Responses	Percentage
It helps to create awareness on the uses and importance of the library	28	93.3
It helps the library managers in decision making	21	70
It helps the library to render effective and efficient library services	23	76.6
It helps the library to make wise use of its limited financial resources	21	70
It helps to promote the library profession	25	83.3
It helps to increase and strengthen the information base of the library	1	3.3
It helps the library in budget preparation	1	3.3
It helps in portraying the library as the heart of the institution	1	3.3

It can be deduced from table 6 that marketing of library services are of immense benefits to Delta State University library as indicated by the respondents by citing various gains of marketing library services which are shown in table 6.

Table 7: What are the challenges encountered by the library in marketing its services?

Challenges in marketing library services	Response	Percentage
Inadequate fund	25	83.3
Poor infrastructure	25	83.3
Low morale among librarians	17	56.6
Lack of modern skills as a result of ill training	21	70
Lack of quality learning facilities	20	66.6
Lack of business expertise on the part of librarian	15	50
The mind set of students and faculties who sees the library as weak and unable to support research	25	83.3

Table 7 states the challenges encountered by librarians in marketing library services which are pointed out by the respondents. The challenges of poor funding, mind-set of the students and faculties who sees the library as weak and unable to support research and poor infrastructure took 83.3% which is the highest. This clearly shows the library is working with inadequate fund that hardly foot the bills of the library, which have also manifested in poor infrastructural facilities in the library. Also the challenges of low morale among librarians, lack of modern skills as a result of ill training, lack of business expertise on the part of the librarians took 56.5%, 70% and 50% respectively. These challenges as pointed out by the respondents are above average, stating clearly how it affects the library in carrying out its primary function of rendering an effective and efficient library services to the library users.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of the data presented, analyzed and discussed on this work by the researcher, it had been concluded that marketing of academic library services in Delta State University library in the 3 campuses (Abraka, Anwai and Oleh) are at its initiation stage as clearly shown from the response gotten from the respondents. This as it may, acts as a draw back to the library in marketing its services and also in supporting the institution in the provision of information for educational and research purposes.

It was also discovered by the researcher the library engage in marketing of its services using various channels such as personal contact with the library users, use of internet services, telephone, television, radio, e-mail services, organization of pep talks, freshers' orientation, library service opinion poll etc all these are geared towards creating an awareness of the services rendered by the library in order to ensure an effective, efficient and a more robust provision of information for the satisfaction of the library users' information needs.

The benefits of marketing library services in Delta State University library cannot be over-emphasized as indicated by the response the researcher got from the respondents. The benefits include; the awareness it creates on the uses and importance of using the library, as a decision making tool, a guide on how the library can render an effective and efficient services, as a tool and guide for budget preparation, a tool for wise use of limited funds available to the library, the promotion it brings to the library profession etc which are panacea in taking the library into a greater height.

However, marketing of academic library services is in-deed part of the library's day to day activities which the researcher was able to deduce from this research work owing to the various services rendered or engaged by the library.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings on this work by the researcher, the following have been recommended:

1. Marketing of academic library services should not be treated with kid gloves and as such the library

should move from partially marketing its services to a more comprehensive and robust marketing system by seeing marketing as a necessary requirement if the library must grow and stand the test of time in this era of ICT.

2. Library as a custodian of information or as information experts must be at the forefront at dispensing information to information seekers. Therefore, modern means of disseminating information such as radio, television, internet, computer, e-mail, facsimile, video conferencing etc should be sort and used by the library as the researcher found out that it is lacking in the library as a medium of dispensing information.
3. Libraries and librarians should device a means of getting finance so as to over-come the issue of inadequate funds by making relevant contributions to the institution they serve and also librarians should be given on the job training so as to boost their ability and capability in order to fit into the jet age where ICT is the order of the day and to see themselves (Librarians) as capable and equal with their marketing counterparts.

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