

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING (PRM) EXPOSING SERVICES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: A CONCEPTUAL VIEW

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Abstract: *University library is the strongest pillar and hub of information dissemination. The main objective of the university library is to support its parent institutions in teaching, learning and research through the provisions of relevant information resources both in print and non-print forms. In the digital era, public relations and marketing (PRM) play an imperative role to provide proper services for the right users at the right time of the right information. The present study aims to interpret the use and awareness of public relations and publicity by the library personnel. The research paper reveals that the PRM activities in academic libraries act as agency for the dissemination of information, knowledge agency, educational agency, agency for research as well as agency for recreation. This study highlights the functions and significance of PRM in libraries. It also indicates in this study that public relations and marketing (PRM) expose library services through its different tools /methods and as well as discussed, the barriers of the PRM in university libraries. Most of the university libraries are not expose their library services among the users and not achieving their full potential because of lack or failure of public relations and marketing activities.*

Keywords: *Public Relations, Marketing, University Library, Library Services and Goodwill.*

Introduction: Libraries and information centers are part and parcel of any academic or research institution anywhere in the world. Information transfer and dissemination of information have long been recognized as essential elements of research and development activities. The use of PRM is considered essential of libraries in the present era of information revolution. It assists users in getting the required resources, creating goodwill among the communities and optimizing the use of their resources and services. PRM reflects the mutual perceptions and attitudes held by both library staff and library customers.

Research question: How does public relations and marketing (PRM) play visible role among faculty members, students and readers?

Great public relations can significantly speed up library's development cycle, increase users' awareness and help promote rapid growth. Library public relations is a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between the

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library and the community and it helps to provide a coordinated effort to communicate a positive image of the library. Academic libraries are very significant in education institutions. However they, in Bangladesh are not achieving their full potential because of lack of or failure of public relations.

Goodwill is priceless. It is public relations that build goodwill through better services to the users. Good service, conceived to support community and institutional goals, will automatically result in good public relations. Good public relations will create lasting goodwill.

Review of Literature

Library public marketing is a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between the library and members of the public (users). Public relation activities help to provide a coordinated effort to communicate a positive image of the library and promote the availability of the library's materials, programs, and services.

Notka (2001) reveals that public relations as the promotion of rapport and goodwill, special public or the community at large through the distribution of interpretative materials and the assessment of public reaction. The basic purpose of public relations is to create and maintain sound relationships with individuals and groups both inside and outside the library.

Rowley (2003) articulated that a majority of the literature on the marketing of libraries and information services is either in the form of how to guide or how to carry on case studies of practice in specific contexts.

According to Henrriet (2004), it is necessary to employ corps and specialist guides to show people around and to explain the functions of the various departments. Good promotional devices have a living effect on users, as these seem to draw readers almost irresistibly to the different dimensions of services offered by the library.

Aniebo (2004) defined information marketing services as the direct personal help given by librarian to a reader who is in need of specific information. He further stresses that it involves helping readers to improve their reading skills, advising students on selection of research project topics and recommending suitable books and journal articles for writing them and doing class assignment.

Anie (2005) observed that public relations go beyond publicity and press relations. In addition to expediting communication, it assists to make management aware of public opinion and shape staff conducts in coping with problems relating to clientele, employee etc. In essence public relations in libraries should be given the necessary attention in terms of provision of human and material resources.

According to Ifidon (2007), certain qualities and competencies must be demanded of the people. He further explained, it is generally assumed that anyone can be reference desks, who naturally find it difficult both to cope with challenges of the job and to carve out a good image for the library.

Howard (2008) explained that public relation in libraries established better patrons' relations, make patrons service better known and improve patron relation, make known the library contributions to the conservation, preservation and dissemination of information for national development, establish good relations between the library and all important social and preserve groups.

Kenneth (2009) defined that public relations counsel the practitioner in the field, advises his library on his attitudes and conduct needed to achieve social objective results. It is fundamentally the function of the human element that exists in the library.

Oyeniya (2009) identified the library as an agency for the conservation of knowledge, research and development as well as recreation and aesthetics. Through its activities, the library impacts on the life of the people. People's opinion generally greatly affects the well being of the library.

Ameen (2011) emphasized "With the challenges ahead the professionals must focus to enhance the visibility of their services among the community" (p. 175).

According to Marketing Guru Kotler (2012), "Marketing is a process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from organizations in return (p.30). Promotion is the last segment in a set of 4Ps like marketing mix and marketing tools consisted of product, price, place and promotion. 4Ps are used to turn marketing philosophy into a marketing management process for creating as offering that meets user's needs and wants".

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the university library is to support its parent institutions in teaching, learning and research through the provision of relevant informational materials both in print and non-print forms.

- i. To make library resources, services and facilities informed among the users through marketing.
- ii. To examine the effect of the university librarian's public relation skill on academic librarian output.
- iii. To maintain good relations among academic community by using the tools of public relations.

Significance of the Study

McDougall and Harwell (1958) have indicated that libraries must realize one of their primary responsibilities is cultivating the good will, understanding and support of the various publics they serve which library public relations program is out to achieve. The prime aim of any academic is to satisfy its users by providing materials to meet their educational, research, information and recreational needs. Publicity / marketing and press agents are methods mostly used by libraries to promote their public relations. The significance of PRM in university libraries are as follows:

- i. Public relations are invariably closely linked with advocacy, marketing, communications, and development
- ii. Librarians get more support from their parent organizations and the public in terms of personnel, budgets and equipment.
- iii. Public relations in libraries concentrate more on selling the library as a whole, developing a corporate identity or image and disseminating a clear message to the community about library missions and goals.
- iv. It helps librarians to build support and promote their services and resources.
- v. To nature students is to build goodwill, to build goodwill is one of the primary functions of effective public relations.
- vi. To make better contact between the librarians and the public, this gave the librarian opportunity to create a good image of the library.
- vii. To bring about co-operation among professional colleagues creating a sense of oneness thereby improving relationship.
- viii. To make better contact between the library staff and the public so that what is known can be enlarged upon and used more fully.
- ix. To publicize and market the functions and services of the library.
- x. To develop knowledge and understanding of a new reorganization or new initiative introduced by the library.

Methodology of the Study

This study is exclusively a qualitative research and thus it is merely experience based on university library practical and promotion for building a new perception about libraries. To obtain this objective of the present study, the researchers have used mostly secondary data from different periods of research papers. Time period of the study is from January 01, 2016 to Mar 31, 2016. Secondary data have been collected from various relevant publications and books. It is mainly focused on awareness and use of library resources through public relations and marketing (PRM) in collaboration with different activities of a library among academic communities in cooperation with parent organizations. This is mainly conceptual view of the study. The study wants to find out how participants in the library can get proper feedback and enhance their skills.

Discussion of the Study

Different Behaviors of PRM in University Libraries

Public Relations and Marketing (PRM) was perceived as dealing in an active, personal manner with visitors in the library. It establishes that the professionals were not clear in their understanding about the concept and role of PRM in academic terms and also familiar with using it effectively for image building and promoting the services among the community. The following activities of PRM are in the responding libraries, (Neuhaus, C. and Snowden, K. (2003, p.196).

i. Organizing events: Libraries need to conduct seminars, lectures; literary events, book exhibitions, and making new members are considered PRM and are being used.

ii. Public / Users dealing: Marketing means that when visitors come, they must be dealt in the best possible way and varies from library to library. It depends on an individual librarian's behavior and cannot be considered as a planned PRM policy of a library.

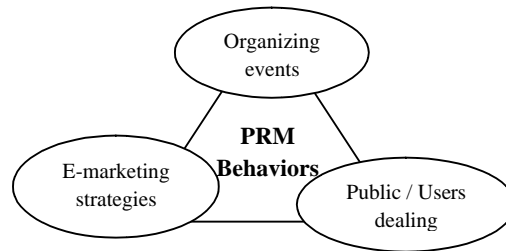


Figure: 1-PRM behavior in Libraries

iii. E- Marketing strategies: Libraries are not used to promote library and it's services. The website either under construction and updated in some cases are still under maintenance. None of the libraries provide outreach services.

Effectiveness and Efficiency of Public Relations in Libraries

Horward (2008, p.85) identified the following as factors to consider in evaluating public relations effectiveness in libraries:

- i. Staffing arrangement
- ii. Building arrangement
- iii. Bibliographic arrangement
- iv. Social and educational arrangement

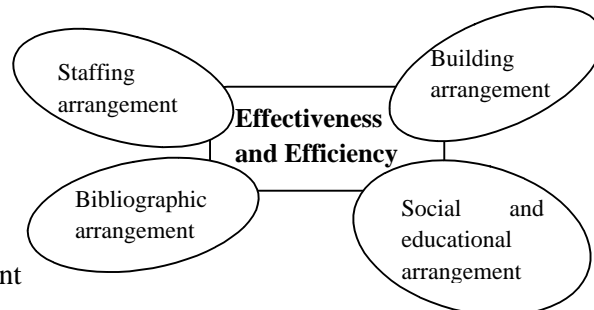


Figure: 2-Effectiveness and Efficiency of PR in libraries

He stressed that the investigation of these factors would show patron's success or failure in library use. His remarks notably bring in another important dimension into the evaluation of library public relation. Management of library should therefore take reasonable care to ensure the observance and practice of good public relation with their clientele in order to enhance effective utilization of the library resources.

Functions of Public Relations in Libraries

The public relations officer in the library who administers policies and programs related to promotions and who maintains a relation with the local media and community groups (Aitufe, T.A., 1993). The following functions in the library are is below:

- i. To bring together organizational activities being done in isolation.
- ii. To promote maximum utilization of library services and resources.
- iii. To act as an intermediary between the users and the library resources making them available to users.
- iv. To make a link between the library and the outside community.
- v. To provide brief, factual information of the ready reference type, conducting literature searches, interlibrary loan for users.
- vi. To gather information related to the activities of the library, this information is then organized for publication purposes to promote the image of the library.
- vii. To create and maintain awareness of library capabilities in the campus and creating publicity for specific services and resources.

PRM Exposing Services in Libraries

According to Bhatt, R.K. (2011, p.56) Publicity refers to the generation of news about a person, product or service that appears in broadcast or print media. Public relation and marketing are synonymous. In fact, publicity /marketing are really a subset of the PRs efforts. There are divided into three groups: (a) Printing methods (b) Electronic methods and (c) Traditional methods.

Printing methods:

- i. **Brochure:** Brochures should be aesthetic and attractive to users as well as language should also be simple and easy so that users can understand easily and feel interest to read it attentively.
- ii. **Leaflets:** Leaflets will act as guides to the library and its special collections. It can be kept in the library at a location which is placed so that user who enters the library is paying attention to that corner.

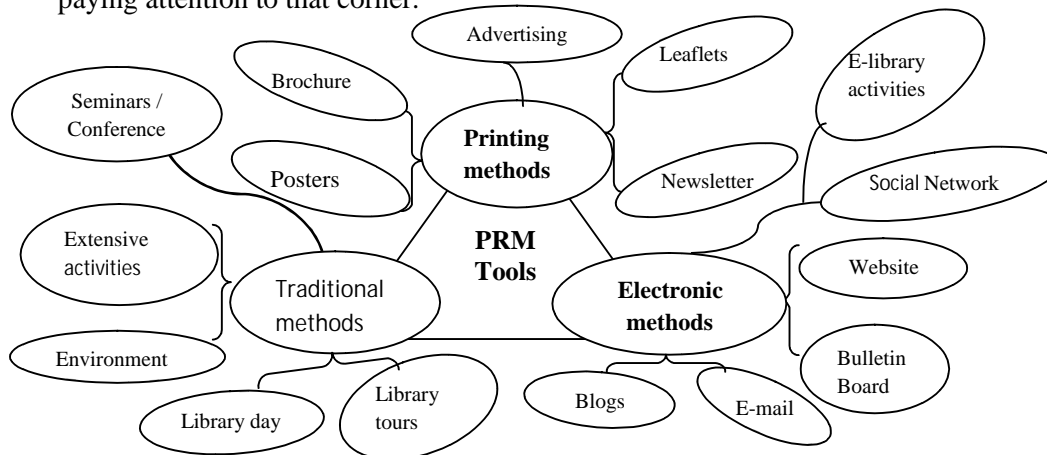


Figure: 3-PRM Tools in Libraries

- iii. **Newsletters:** The library can convey information about new acquisitions, new services, events and activities, fee changes etc. In fact, there are excellent marketing tools due to include all the activities of a library.
- iv. **Posters:** It offers good visual communication. It can be displayed at prominent locations and provide brief information about an event, service, etc. Old and defaced posters need to be replaced on a regular basis.
- v. **Advertising:** Advertisement can play a very important role to expose the library services. Libraries can advertise its products and services in newspapers, scholarly journals, magazines, newsletters, radio, television, web etc. It helps in building image of the library.

Traditional methods:

- i. **Extensive activities:** These activities like book display, lectures, quiz debates, seminars, competitions, exhibitions, etc. can play positive impact on the image of the library. Users can motivate to come to the library and promote the use of its products and services.
- ii. **Environment:** Good environment is the most important factors to use the library by the users.

It reflects the appearance of employees, the physical setting, lighting, work environment, noise level etc. It must be healthy and suitable to make a positive impact on users.
- iv. **Library tour:** While on a library tour, users can be promoted to ask questions and find out more about new activities, products, and services. Library tour for new and existing members can be used to promote the library services.
- v. **Library Monthly/Day:** Libraries can create awareness of its importance in society through organizing national library day/month can be effective way to promote the library.
- vi. **Seminars/conference:** Seminars/conference is an effective method to create awareness about library services and facilities among the users. Library can arrange such seminars / conference frequently for the users.

Electronic methods:

- i. **Websites:** The websites contain details about the library. It can be continuously updated to avoid an adverse effect on the image of the library. Websites can play a significant role to increase the impact on the users.
- ii. **Bulletin board:** It is a medium for messages of interest to a community of online users. This service can be used by libraries for disseminating information to online users.
- iii. **E-mail:** It is the most universal application on the Internet and it can be used for direct communication with potential users. There are many benefits to using email as a promotional tool that create personalized services, membership renewal, easily communicate with library personnel anytime and anywhere.

- iv. **Blogs:** Libraries can use blogs to promote its products and services by making it appealing and informative. To get feedback, comments and suggestions can be invited from visitors.
- v. **Social networks:** Now a day, social networks are mostly used for sharing knowledge, attractive image, interesting events, update news and also rare news which can be motivated to use the library resources. Facebook is one of them which act as digital knowledge platform for the users to share relevant knowledge each other.
- vi. **E-library activities:** In the digital era, digital library/e-library can play a vital role to promote library resources, facilities and services among the users. Information providers need to realize actual needs of the users and try to meeting their demands of the users with the application of IT.

Barriers of the PRM in Libraries [Marshall, N.J. (2001)]

- i. **Lack of proper service structure:** There are hardly any rewards and promotions for the deserving staff and do not have a desired service structure. As a result, library personnel do not get motivated to do his /her work in a regular manner.
- ii. **Lack of time:** It was also observed that a lot of their time is spent on writing minutes, reports of various meetings held by the higher bodies to various library matters; though they are not the secretaries of those bodies.
- iii. **Lack of PRM education and training:** It is one of the most important reasons for not using it in a strategic manner. Libraries need to organize such training in order to exposing library resources, services and facilities among users' community.

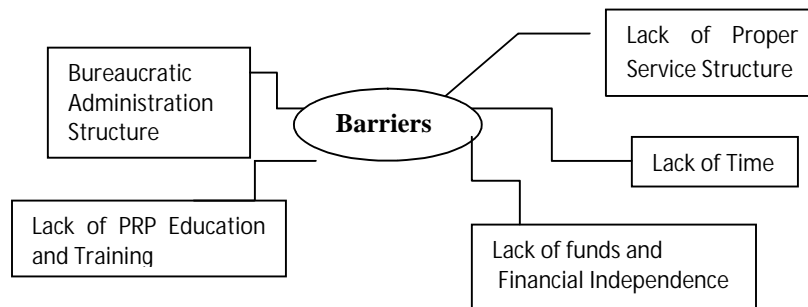


Figure: 4- Barriers of PRM in Libraries

- iv. **Bureaucratic administration structure:** University librarian does not have much authority to initiate any plan on their own due to strictly hierarchical administrative structure. Librarians must maintain good relation with higher authority so that any plan can be implemented for the benefit of the users.
- v. **Lack of funds and financial independence:** Libraries do not get funds to initiate planned PRM plans. The bureaucratic administrative structure leads to a lack of financial independence and cause unnecessary delays and hurdles in running of the libraries.

This model developed by the authors is to expose library services among the user community. This model can develop library environment to study by the users as well as enhance satisfaction to proper use of library resources. Public relations and human resources (HR) are interconnected with library marketing to promote services in university libraries. University libraries are nonprofit organization and it provides and develop learning environment for the users to applying library strategy. Human resources/library professionals are the main strength to develop library environment and provide proper services to the right users.

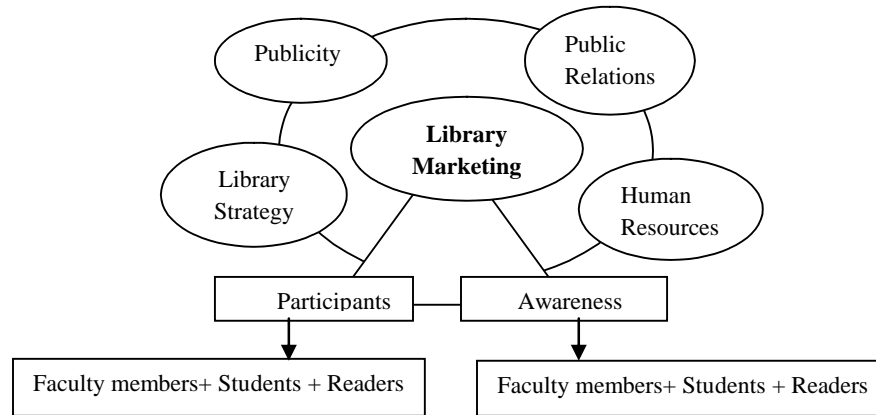


Figure: 5- Library marketing diagram developed by the authors

Library management is a nucleus. It is associated with non-profit business, marketing, public relations and publicity. Library marketing is related to participation and awareness. Both participation and awareness is related to students, faculties and users. Efficiency and effectiveness of the library marketing is related to public relations and publicity.

Conclusion and Implications:

Everyone does not know regarding library services and everyone does not use library resources. Sometimes successful public relations involve overcoming negative attitudes of the users. University libraries are changing and dynamic places, it is the place of opportunity; and it brings us to the world. Being helped to know, the users will be encouraged to come for more searches since he/she was successful through the use of these public relation stools effectively. Academic libraries are very significant in education institutions. Non-business performance of library marketing accelerates knowledge, skill, teaching and learning system. Institutional quality assurance cell of Daffodil International University is trying to develop library marketing through focus based need.

Actually, library needs self-assessment of current and future demand of users for supply of the products/resources to improve quality of the readers. Library ambassadors can work for marketing without cash profit to increase goodwill of library. However, university libraries are not achieving their full potential because lack of or failure of