

**ADVOCACY FOR EMPLOYABILITY OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
GRADUATES: THE CONTRIBUTORY ROLE OF MARKETING.**

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Abstract

Libraries and their professionals are presently experiencing changes in the new information age, due to rapidly changing media and information technology, increasing information seekers' preference and expectations, competition from other information providers such as internet and poor library budgets. These situations require library and information science professionals utilizing marketing approaches to strategically prepare themselves and the libraries as information super-highways that individuals cannot do without. This study therefore present marketing as a way to advocate for the employability of library and information science graduates. It discussed the position of librarians in this advocacy, the importance of marketing as a tool for the advocacy, Strategies for marketing, barriers to the advocacy for employability of LIS graduates and possible solutions to the identified problems.

Keywords: Marketing, advocacy, Employability and LIS Graduates

Introduction

Marketing is an essential tool both in library and information science and other disciplines, and more importantly a tool for showcasing goods and services. Library and information professionals cannot avoid marketing practice in their operation and services. The advent of information technology has made the library and information service more competitive and so librarians are meant to showcase their competencies and services to the people above other information providers so that their values and services will be on high demand.

In the words of Sharma(2013), marketing is the process of building lasting relationship through planning, executing and controlling the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create mutual exchange that satisfy individual and organizational needs and objectives. The term marketing in libraries means to create the demand and network among patrons to use the library resources and services.

Marketing of library and information services aims at determining the needs, wants and demands of the target clients through designing and delivering appropriate information services more efficiently for the purpose of achieving organizational goals and objectives. Librarians can therefore explore the process of marketing to showcase their services to the market place for the purpose of visibility and employability

The position of Librarians in the Advocacy for Employability

We are living in a complex information environment that is highly competitive where library and information science profession is undergoing immense transformation that has affected the landscape of library and information service parlance. In our contemporary society, information has become the hub upon which economic development rotates, Hence, the place of library and information science cannot be ignored (Anyanwu, 2013). We live in 21st century knowledge economy where increasing demand for information and reliance on information creates an environment that is full of opportunities where professionals who have skills can harness and be creators of wealth and jobs. Library and information science, as a discipline is designed to produce information professionals that will completely serve different stakeholders

for development through marketing. As such, the graduates of library and information science ought to be empowered through managerial and generic skills for the task.

Library and information science have a lot of potential to develop the knowledge and skills required to sustain and survive the present day information society. Globalization and liberalization has opened up multiple carrier options to the library and information science profession. The field, library and information science is multidisciplinary in nature as a result of which tremendous changes can be traced in the discipline (*Kumar 2010*). There are many employment opportunities for library and information science graduates which have been influenced by digital environment. As a discipline it offers a wide range of employment opportunities in different settings, be it public, academic, or special, government or non-government, traditional, hybrid or digital. There is a very bright future prospect for library and information science graduates but only properly trained graduates can have employment opportunities in the various sectors.

The very nature of employment in library is changing as the job market is a fast-changing environment. Employer of labour expect more from library and information science graduates invariably demanding more knowledge, varied skills and techniques that fits present library's requirements. There is an urgent need for creation of new generation of employable library information science graduates since traditional roles of library and information science have changed with the advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) Library and

information science professionals need to have various skills, competences necessitated by technological advances and changing role of the profession itself.

The importance of marketing as a tool for advocacy for employability:

It is very crucial that library and information services be marketed as a means of advocating for marketplace employability, In today's complex information environment, we have a responsibility to communicate the resources and expertise our libraries and librarians provide, both on our campus and in society. For libraries and information services to stay viable in the current climate, it is important that they adopt marketing strategies to help meet organizational mission, goals and objectives. Without a marketing orientation, a high-tech library or information service would not necessarily be successful. With increased competition in the world of information, marketing is a factor for survival. (Olorunfemi and Ipadeola 2018) The importance of marketing as a means of showcasing the services of librarians for marketplace employability cannot be over emphasize, Some of the importance of marketing are as follows.

- **For visibility:** The current demand for information has put librarians at a vantage point and placed them on a strategic area in which they can function not only effectively but maximally. This is largely due to the fact that the importance of information cannot be overemphasized. Its value also, cannot be quantified. We could therefore say it is valuable and essential. Several associations and institutions that originally detested librarians, libraries and information marketers are now changing their mode of operation by putting out adverts for information managers to assist them in getting access to

relevant information. (Lanre and Omeiza 2020). The onus is binding therefore on librarians to hone their information marketing skills. Librarians need to market their services to remain visible in the current information age

- **Competition:** Libraries are no longer the only information services industries. The mega-bookstores, online book dealers, information consultants, the Internet services providers, free web access providers and individual customers will not hesitate to market to potential library customers or users. • Libraries of all types have to compete with other organizations for marketability. Marketing library services and products is beneficial therefore so that librarians are able to get known by people on what they can do better than others. For instance, Some information givers like the cyber cafes believe that they can do whatever the librarians can do Olorunfemi and Ipadeola,(2018) added that Librarians and information scientists need to present their services as an indispensable part of the organization and try to justify the claim that their clients cannot do their job efficiently or effectively without a library service, so Librarians have to advocate their potentials to prove themselves irreplaceable and thereby take up their employment and other opportunities in the society
- **Employment:** This is the crux of this discussion, one of the key important of marketing is to showcase the library and information science graduates to the market place for employability. Employability can be defined as a set of achievement skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation, which benefits themselves, the work force, the

community and the economy. According to (Knight 2009) the term employability refers to capability of getting and keeping satisfactory work. Employability skills are knowledge, skills, and competencies that workers process to make improvement in their work and their ability to get and keep a job, progress at work, make changes, get other jobs if the worker wants to quit from a job or dismissed and enter more easily into the labor market at different periods (Fajaryati, Budiyono, & Wiranto 2020).According to Warraich (2018) today's aggressive information based economy does not require the theoretical knowledge of subject alone however, for graduate to survive in the information market, They will have to develop market oriented skills to meet the challenging as well as changing needs of employers. They will have to improve their, problem solving attitude, and good knowledge of IT, to compete in the information market

Marketing is fundamental and is regarded as critical in the management process for promoting information products and services. Marketing knowledge can help librarians gain a competitive advantage over competitors

Marketing strategies for Graduate Employability

Librarians can market their services through different media; Warraich (2018) opined that a mobile friendly website will help the users to send information through various devices. . Marketing is not just about developing and promoting new services and products but also about bringing awareness to clients of existing services and products and determining their

appropriateness. He outlined many online devices and sites that can help the librarian market himself and his services to the market. Some of them include;

- Social media; one of the most effective ways of marketing products and services today is the social media. Social media is a digital technology that facilitates the sharing of text and multimedia through virtual networks and communities, ideas, personal messages, and other content. (Modibbo, Dauda , Sanni and Joan 2018). Ezugwu and Mbajorgu (2018) opined that social media are interactive networks used to communicate information among associates and the general public. It is primarily internet or cellular phone based applications and tools that aids sharing of information among people. Social media includes popular networking websites, like Facebook and Twitter. Eda and Ukubeyinje, (2019) Facebook Twitter and You tube are social media sites that can help librarians showcase themselves for employment.
- Home page; a home page is a webpage that serves as the starting point of website. It is the default webpage that loads when one visits a web address that only contains a domain name, Librarians can create a home page and through it reach out to the public about him and his services.
- Pinterest; This is a website that allows libraries share photos, allowing them to create image collections and arrange them by themes, like events, interests, hobbies, and others. This media can help librarians to share fliers billboards online in order to attract patronage

- Internet Blogging; this also is any aspect of an interactive presence which allows individuals the ability to engage in conversations with one another. A library can create a subject specific blog which can give more and more information on activities carried out in any institutions and private endeavour .
- Electronic mailing system may contain text, files, images, audio, video, or audiovisual attachments sent through a network to a specified individual or group of individuals. This also can be a way of communicating expertise online

Marketing involves promotion which is the persuasive data about general services and the communication of this data to target prospective user sections of the industry. Advertising, public relations, private agents, and sales promotion are five types of promotion. Librarians can also use the promotion activities to market their services. other media like newspaper and radio advertisement, fliers and billboards and oral communications are other ways librarians can showcase themselves and their product.

Barriers to the Advocacy for Employability of LIS Graduates

There are many constraints to effective marketing of library and information products and services. These constraints in turns affect the employability of library and information science graduates adversely.

One of the most decisive constraints are lack of adequate awareness, inadequacy of funding followed by irregular power supply, high cost of ICT tools prohibitive cost of ICT equipment and inadequate ICT up-dating opportunities. other constraints include: attitude of library patrons, locations of library and Information centres, language barriers, and inadequate

knowledge of users need.(Benson, Udo-Anyanwu and Onuoha 2016) .It is also expedient to understand that lack of competencies and skills in the relevant services is also a barrier to the advocacy for employability; This is because one must have something to offer before he/she can think of telling people about it. In the words of Pradhan (2015)Lack of ICT skills among library professionals in a digital age where every sector of human endeavor is ICT driven is a serious handicap in the advocacy for employability of LIS graduates. A modern library and information science graduate cannot do well without ICT skills. The effective delivery of library and information services in automated and virtual carrier opportunities for library and information science graduates demands proficiency in ICT and its associated technology. He added that most lecturers in library schools are not ICT conscious and this apparently affects their mode of teaching. This ugly trend does affect the overall objective of the 21st century librarianship.

Lack of functional workshop and laboratories are serious barriers as Pradhan (2015) noted that finance ought to be available to acquire equipments required to impart the necessary skills to students and that a visit to these laboratories will reveal that Nigerian library schools lack the standing focus to teach necessary skills needed in the labour market when in actual sense, the workshop that exists cannot empower effective teaching. Gupta, Koontz and Massisimo cited in Olorunfemi and Ipadeola (2018) outlined several factors militating against the effective marketing of library and information resources and services, such as poor marketing strategy

Absence of marketing policies, lack of skilled manpower and infrastructural constraints are also among the militating factors including lack of funds to engage in marketing activities as

well as lack of exposure to adequate marketing training in library schools. Pradhan (2015) pointed out other issues that affect the employability of library and information science graduates as: internal promotion policy, proxy librarian teachers being referred to as librarians, entry of non-professionals (information technology professionals) into professional positions. The author studied the capability of library and information science education with the today's market demand for library and information science professionals and concluded that Lack of placement cell and medium of instruction often proved to be major hindrances in getting jobs. Similarly, Adekunmisi (2017) identified a lack of business expertise among academic librarians, as well as a lack of interest in the concept and idea of marketing mix among librarians and library top management as challenge in product marketing. These scenarios can be attributed to deficiencies in the library school curriculum's marketing concepts and principles.

Possible ways of combating the hindrances for the advocacy for Employability of Library Science Graduates

It is one thing to identify a problem and another thing to proffer solution to the problem, Problems facing the advocacy or marketing of library and information science graduates though numerous yet can be handled. Benson, Udo-Anyanwu and Onuoha (2016) suggested that, creating a good library for the training of the library students can go a long way to prepare library and information science graduates for employability, establishment of a collaborative network between librarians, provision of technical support encouraging networking among librarians would help in ameliorating the challenges of marketing of the library professionals Furthermore Eda and Ukubeyinje, (2019) opined that library staff requires the professional understanding and abilities for advertising data and library services, The training of the librarians

in the technical knowledge of being able to use the internet and different marketing approaches to promote data skills is necessary in curbing the problems of marketing.

In the words of Modibbo, Dauda , Sanni and Joan (2018) librarians should be involved in the development of marketing web-based information resources using the library website. They should develop robust user-centered web-based interfaces that not only provide patrons with access to their products and services but also create virtual environments which will enable patrons to contribute to the selection of their collections, to channel the delivery of value-added services, in order to engage in two way communication with library staff and the entire market environment, They added that library professionals can even collaborate with other libraries, and co professionals and device ways of combating the problems of marketing.

In addition Osinulu, Adekunmis, Okewale, and Oyewusi, (2018) further points out that the much needed financial and administrative support makes marketing principles and strategies more germane to academic libraries and so suggested the provision of financial support to library science graduates in terms of soft loans or grants to help ameliorate the challenges of the advocacy, They added that librarians should adopt marketing principles and strategies and apply them in order to exist and remain relevant in the current and emerging new information age.

Marketing is very crucial in determining and satisfying the needs, wants and demands of the targeted clients Librarians as gateways to information should use the power of competitive advantage to attract and retain patrons in the face of potential competitors such as internet services providers, online book dealers and mushroom cyber cafes and many others.

Professionals must strategically reorient themselves and their services as information superhighways that user communities cannot do without. To attain this feat, library professionals must embrace leverages that skillfully allow them to compete favorably with competitors to generate more profits while retaining more customers (Olorunfemi and Ipadeola 2018)

Recommendations

The following recommendations are to be considered for enhancing the advocacy for employability of Library and Information Science graduates:

1. Library and Information Science curriculum generally should be reviewed on a regular interval by all library schools to accommodate new development in the field.
2. Library and Information Science graduates should not only look for the employment possibilities from known sources rather they should also explore other profitable and exciting avenues such as a big corporate houses, publication houses, research and statistical institutes, multinational organizations etc.
3. Library and Information Science schools should give more emphasis on practical classes rather than theoretical class only. Development of communication skills is one of the most neglected areas of professional development in library and information science schools.
4. Training and re-training of information science professionals and lecturers in Library schools on ICT skills is also recommended

5. There should be provision of funds by various stakeholders in the educational system to ensure the acquisition of relevant equipment in various library schools.

Conclusion.

The influx of the cybercafé and other information providers had become a challenge to the libraries and library professionals, in turn trying to relegate librarianship to the background, In order to remain relevant, and employable, librarians should develop themselves with relevant skills and leverage on marketing as a tool to advertize, their capabilities above other information providers in order to gain relevance, visibility and finally be employable in the information age labour market. This work exposes, the prospects and position of the library professionals in the marketing exercise for the advocacy for marketplace employability, it discussed the importance of marketing and strategies for marketing. It pointed out some challenges facing librarians in the advocacy for employability through marketing, suggested ways of solving the problems Useful recommendations were also made by the researchers.

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