

# E-MARKETING OF LIBRARY SERVICES BEST PRACTICES IN LIBRARIES

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## Abstract

The paper defines the concept and describes the strategy for application of best practices in Academic libraries in digital era. It discusses importance of introducing best practices in a modern library and information centre to enable it to improve its processes and activities, optimize resource utilization, and deliver high quality, value added services to its users. NAAC in India to develop best practices / guidelines for different types of libraries and /or for specific services. The process that are adopted in the academic libraries will be a continuous improvement and overall performance in the institution / organization.

Keywords: Best practices. Academic Libraries, Digital services, NAAC.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The recent developments in the field of information, communication and technology have also changed the expectations of the users in many ways. Hence, there is a greater responsibility on the academic library personnel to identify and adopt best and effective practices to meet the demands if end-users. UGC-NAAC defines best practices as an application of procedures to yield superior results which means way of doing things in particular organization as guidelines for good practices. The use of ICT with creative / innovative ideas leads to evolve best practices in library and information environment which can be replicated in library and information centres.

## 2. ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

The role of the library and information centre in a college is aimed at realizing the educational goals of the college or the parent organization. The college libraries not only provides stimulus to reading by procuring materials for study and research, by introducing open access system, by providing long hours of open, by organizing the library resources in a systematic way, but also feeds the intellect of the student, encourage the researches of the faculty and thus serve the teaching and research needs of the faculty.

The college library and information resource centre acts as a vehicle for disseminating information and the related computer technologies through the best practices for utilization by its community of users and also for the exchange of information among its users.

## 2.1 CHALLENGES FACED BY ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

- Impact of ICT on Libraries.
- Explosive growth of information and documents
- Increased cost of the documents and information materials
- Increase in users information needs
- New role of the librarian and greater responsibilities.
- Latest techniques and concepts in handling of information.
- New electronic information environment.
- Creation of databases and its security.
- Marketing of library and information services.

The library and information centre of an institution play a central role in facilitating dissemination and creation of new knowledge.

## 3. DEFINITION OF BEST PRACTICES

- a) **Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary** describes 'best practices as quality of high standard, excellence, highly improved, outstanding, par excellence service. It means way of doing something that is usual or expected way in a particular organization or situation, guidelines for good practices. In this process of developing best practices we take action rather than good ideas, and we improve our skills.'
- b) **Best Practices:** add commendable value to an institution. Considered as reliable benchmarks or standards of quality. Tools for the continuous improvement of products, processes and services. Leads to development of an understanding of the fundamentals that lead to success.

**3.1 Strategy for Application of Best Practices** The successful application of the best practices can be achieved by adopting the following five-stage strategy (7) : Identification of best practices

- Implementation of best practices
- Institutionalization of best practices
- Internalization of best practices
- Dissemination of best practices

### 3.2 National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) and Best Practices

University Grants Commission created a higher education body (whose job is to assess the quality of university and college institutions) in 1994 in Bangalore on the recommendation of National Policy of Education (NPE) in 1986. This is National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) which strives for quality and excellence in higher education and advocates for enhancing the role of library and Information Services in improving academic environment. Document prepared by NAAC for “Best Practices in Academic Libraries says : “Best practice may be innovative and be a philosophy, policy, strategy, program, process or practice that solves a problem or create new opportunities and positively impact on organizations. “NAAC developed a set of best practices followed in academic libraries and presented under the following four broad areas:

1. Management and Administration of Library.
2. Collection and Services.
3. Extent of User Services.
4. Use of Technology.

### 4. E-marketing of library services

#### 4.1 User Empowerment, Library Marketing and promoting library services

- a. **Extended Hours of Service:** Extended library opening hours helps the users, especially students during examination time to utilize the services optimally and thereby fulfil the first law of library science i.e documents are for use.
- b. **E- Library Statistics:** This practice involves maintenance of usage statistics in all sections of the library. Maintenance of visitors’ login in the system and purpose of visit helps in knowing how many users are visiting and for what purpose.
- c. **Library Tour:** Take a Library Tour a ll the new entrants are taken to the library tour in small groups to physically show them the library resources, how to access these resources and various other services that they can avail during their studies. Live demonstration of e-resource is one of the important components of the tour.
- d. **Virtual library tour:** A simple tour will also expose you to the different forms and locations of library resources, such as help desks, shelves for current periodicals, reference shelves, and stacks for less recent resources.
- e. **Orientation Programmes:** Librarian should organize intensive programmes for orientation of new students in the beginning of the academic year. Institute librarian is a regular invitee to address the new entrants and explains them the important role a library

plays in higher education An audio-visual presentation is made to introduce them to the facilities, rules, resources (print and electronic), and services of the library.

- f. **Educating the User/ E-resources awareness programme:** The academic libraries have a great role and responsibility in creating awareness among its users which will help to make use of the library resources, facilities, services, more effectively and efficiently. Through 1 User orientation which may be individual or groups, Kulkarni (2009). Library Brochures, circulars, Pamphlets and handouts.
- g. **Intellectual property rights/ Copy right / Plagiarism:** Conduct information literacy programme to create awareness on IPR, copyright and plagiarism how to use sources, quote references, benefit of the author, plagiarism software's, plagiarism policies/guidelines/penalties for the users to reduce the plagiarism is very important in the digital era.

#### 4.2 Internet/Local Area Network/ WiFi Facility in the Campus

The goal of this practice is to network the information resources of the library with the entire academic and research activities on the university / college campus and to evolve a user friendly environment by using the information and communication technology tools to provide quality and quick retrieval of the information sources along with resources available in other libraries at their desktops.

##### 4.21. Web based– Digital Library Services

Library has computerized all its operations and activities are meant for users to access OPAC, databases, e-books, e-journals and other e-resources. Multimedia products, Daily News papers etc. This is the human interface between library and its users. A service that connects users with the library and helps them to make full use of the resources. It includes guidance in the use of information resources and services, help in locating required documents, instructions for accessing on line library resource

- a. **Automation of Library Services:** The goal of this practice is to automate all the housekeeping operations viz. acquisition of books and other material, creating maintenance of its catalogued database, circulation of its holdings etc, to give service more quickly, efficiently and effectively and thereby meet the fourth law of library science i.e save the time of the user. Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) facilitates the users to search for information by author, subject, title, ISBN, keywords etc and helps to reserve item on loan, view special collections, cancel reservations, request renewal of loan, to see list of new arrivals, request addition of new publication, define SDI profile.
- b. **Library Portal:** The Library Portal is a gateway to its resources and services. The purpose of an information gateway of this type is to help users discover high quality, relevant web-based information quickly and effectively. The portal besides providing information about the staff, collection and services, allows access to the OPAC, and provides direct link to e-resources on publishers' site. User interaction is encouraged

- through a number of e-mail links. Website performs the role of an effective help desk and promotional tool for libraries. As practiced in many college libraries abroad, audio tours of libraries, detailed maps and brochures serves as a great help for libraries. A user friendly environment should make the users more confident and efficient library users without requiring help from the library staff.
- c. **Institutional Archive/ Digitization of Manuscripts:** Library should set up an archive of publications brought out by the faculty and the institute, using open source software, The archive, accessible initially on the Intranet facilitates on-line submission of the publications by the authors permissible within the copyright regulations. The archive will become a full-text database of all publications produced by the Library. The goal of this practice is to preserve and conserve rare documents and archaic material for progeny. All the old and rare documents are digitized and stored for future access by the potential users.
  - d. **Links to e-Resources subscribed/ open access resources:** E-Resources are available 24x7, allow multiple concurrent users, are more current than their print counterparts, support distance education, reach to remote and under-served areas and have no constraint of time and location besides saving library space. These sources can be searched, browsed and interlinked with other publications and databases, downloaded and saved.
  - e. **Subject gateway portal:** Is the very important tool for users to access information. so provides links to subject gateways through the library portal.
  - f. **Web-OPAC:** The collection of the library can be accessed through on line catalogue – Web OPAC. It allows simple, and complex, multi-field search (using Boolean logic) options. The search results are displayed with minimal information. The selected item can be displayed in full format. The output also gives information whether a particular document is already loaned to any member and the scheduled date of its return. The interest members can make reservation /claim to borrow on return of such documents.
  - g. **E-Question paper services :**upload the old question papers in database or in digital repositories.
  - h. **e-News paper / Web based Press clippings:** Clippings related to organisation, education, any information relevant to the users can give the links archives to e-news papers website or provide hyper text link to scanned clippings daily, compile month wise / year wise news clippings subject wise and preserve in a digital format for future reference.
  - i. **Information Alert Services:** The library offers a number of current awareness services to inform and alert its users. A weekly/fortnightly list of recent additions of books, pamphlets, reports, standards, annual reports and faculty publications added to the collection is put on the library website. It displays important information of interest appearing in journals, newspapers, newsletters and other sources. The library also displays announcements of forthcoming conferences and international events, and list of articles of general interest scanned from the current issues of journals received.

- j. **Electronic document delivery services:** through fax machine for immediate delivery of photo copies of articles via telephone lines.
- k. **Virtual Reference Desk/Ask your Librarian:** All our users as well as others can ask any question related to the library using the link “Ask your Librarian” through the website. This link serves as a virtual reference desk. Website offering facilities like “Ask a Librarian”, provision of bibliographies, new additions, maps of collection and online catalogues solve lots of users’ queries from their homes.
- l. **Web-based Instructions, FAQs,The** library uses its website optimally to provide appropriate instructions so that users are able to use various resources and services effectively. A link to FAQs attempts to answer general queries that users normally ask.
- m. **e-Feed back /e-Suggestions :** Provision has made in the website to get the online feedback /suggestions from the user and take initiative to fulfil the need of the library user.
- n. **E-news letter:** Publish the library e-news letter and provide link to library website. Or send through e-mail.
- o. **Training Seminars and Workshops:** The library organizes training sessions and workshops for the users whenever a new product database or service is introduced. These programmes include presentations, demonstrations and exhibitions, and are organized at the institute level as well as at the department level depending upon the relevance and need.
- p. **Online /eTOC services:** Links provided in the library websites.
- q. **Discussion forum/Groups:** Join the discussion forum on the internet to meet people around the world with similar interest, ask questions, and discuss the problems faced by you.
- r. **Vendors’ Participation:** One of the important methods of user awareness is active involvement of the publishers and vendors. It is different from vendors selling their products. They regularly visit the institute to interact with library staff and the users to update them with new developments and/or features added to their product. Publishers or their representatives are also invited to give a detailed presentation about that resource followed by a live demonstration. Many publishers/vendors request the library to let them conduct training sessions to update users.
- s. **E-Book displays:** use e books display rack to display the books purchased for the Library can be arranged on the e- display rack.
- t. **Social media:** Social media is key to 21st century communication with library users, and enables the academic library to promote library resources and services. Use blogs, facebook, twitter, YouTube, slide share. LinkedIn, RSS feed used to share information, photos related to library events.
- u. **Career information services:** CIS can be provide through social networking sites. Implementing a social media policy will streamline responsibility for the management of various platforms and provide guidelines for posts and interactions online with library patrons and the public.

- v. **E-mail:** Use e-mail tool to communicate or to provide library services to the library user. The library makes good use of all these list services to communicate with the users particularly when a new e-resource is introduced or a service is launched. These services are also useful for informing or inviting users to a seminar or a demonstration organized by the library. It is an extremely important medium to market library resources and services.
- w. **Other important Best Practices RFID & CCTV Implementation:** (for Security Purpose) Career/Employment Information/ Services. (with USEFI)

#### 4.3 Mobile based Library services

- **Mobile online public access catalogs (OPACs):** Libraries are providing access to their OPACs via mobile-optimized websites.
- **Mobile applications**—Some libraries have developed mobile applications for smart phones. OPAC and the ability to place items on hold, and also provide information on hours and locations of local libraries.
- **Mobile collections**—Third-party content providers are partnering with libraries to deliver audio books, e-books, audio language courses, streaming music, films, images, and other multimedia that can be used on mobile devices. The Overdrive service is supported on numerous mobile devices and has developed an application for BlackBerry smart phones (see <http://www.overdrive.com>).
- **Mobile library instruction**—Some libraries are offering library instructional materials and resources
- **Library Short Message Service (SMS) notifications**—Many libraries use SMS for a variety of purposes, including notification for items available for pickup, due date reminders, information on availability of library materials, provision of call numbers and locations, and
- **SMS Reference**—Some libraries are offering “text-a-librarian” services which is ideal for simple questions that can be answered with a brief response.

**CONCLUSION:** implementing the best practices is the responsibility of the librarian for the benefit of the user. Use of technology in designing and delivering the information products and services in a library has always yielded good results. Librarian should create an environment and conditions for keeping abreast of the new and latest knowledge and uses of modern technological achievements in the field so that the knowledge from the source to its beneficiaries or users can be disseminated in a most efficient and effective way through the adoption of the best practices.

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