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Blogs, Marketing And Libraries: An Important Ict Tool In Promoting Library Services

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Abstract:

With the rapid advancement in on-line technologies libraries are experiencing a period of radical change. It is not just to provide only good service but the promotion of the same is important. Digital libraries are coming up and are changing so quickly that user must be informed. In order to survive library professional must assume a proactive role and adopt new strategies for expanding the customer base and fulfilling customer requirements and expectations. Library services, programs and resources can be promoted online easily with the use of library blog. This article attempts to throw light on relationship in library and marketing, about blog, its features, and types in brief and how it is applicable in the field of library and information science for attracting the users.

Keywords : Blog, Library Blog, Library Services-Marketing, blogging

Introduction :

The landscape around is changing rapidly. A good part of the change can be attributed to the rapid technical advances in information computation and communication technologies. A major impact has been on the role of intermediaries. It is not surprising these advances have a major impact on the libraries, librarians and information professionals. It is a time to empower the end user and give him the right to self navigate, do much of his work at this own convenience. In this era of information technology, libraries are experiencing a period of radical change in all their activities particularly while providing information services to their users. Library and information professional must assume proactive role to cope with the increasing competition. Today's Libraries must adopt some strategies for expanding the customer base and fulfilling the requirements and expectations. Marketing of library and information services help the managers of library and information centers in achieving the self sufficiency in their resources and to provide an optimum level of services to reach more potential users and to encourage the use of library resources. So Blog , an important web 2.0 tool can be used to promote library services, resources and programs online.

Library and Marketing:

Library being service providing institution acquires process and store information as per needs and demands of the users. Due to technological advancement s, nature of demands has changed. Twenty-first century service providers should ensure that their products and services enhance the customer's ability to adapt and survive under difficult conditions. Customers are most important, they are not dependent on the library rather the library depend on them. Kotler also said that business success is not determined by the producer but by the customer. Even User focus was advocated since the inception of library services. Dr. Ranganathan's concept of five laws had marketing concept at their core.

First Law- Books are for use (Books are for the users and maximize the use of books)

Second law- Every reader His/Her book (Reader is prime and his/her needs must be satisfied)

Third Law- Every Book its Reader (Find the reader for every book, so reader is prime)

Fourth law- Save the time of Reader (Focus is on reader and reader satisfaction)

Fifth law- Library is a growing organism (Growth should be comprehensive meeting the current and expected demands of the reader in a changing environment. So Reader/user focus is prime).

Thus user/Customer focus has long been advocated. It may be refined to the current settings. Library and information professionals should strive hard to gain a vision of need, demands, desires and aspirations of our valued customers. There have been so many ways for promoting library services to broaden the user/customer base of which blog is becoming popular.

What a blog is?

Blogs are an interactive website that allows the owner to publish the ideas and information on a regular basis. It contains the dated entries in a reverse chronological order about a particular topic. The brief entries can be of commentary description of events or other material like audio, video, graphics etc. posted daily or weekly basis. User can read and evaluate material and add new contents thus creating a conversation. It allows two ways interaction. They are easily linked and cross-linked to create larger user communities. Blog can be written by one person or a group of contributors.

Blog is variously defined as

It's an online journal comprised of links and postings in a reverse chronological order (Dan, Gilmour)

A weblog "is an online diary or frequently updated personal web page (University of Lethbridge's)

It is a web application that contains periodic, reverse chronologically ordered posts on a common web page (Wikipedia).

Features of Blog:

- ❖ Entries/Postings are always arranged in chronological order with most recent additions
- ❖ A Blog is easy to create and update
- ❖ No coding is required, No typical hardware is required
- ❖ It can function as more personal online diary
- ❖ It can combine text, images and links to other blogs, WebPages and other media related to particular topic.
- ❖ It allows two ways interactions. The reader can leave comments so its interactive format makes it attractive. It provides the facility to react immediately.
- ❖ It can provide RSS feeds for all postings.

Types of Blog:

There are different types of blogs differing not only in type of contents but also in the way that content is delivered or written

- Personal blog : is an ongoing diary or commentary by an individual.
- Corporate blog: Blog can be private or for business purpose written and maintained by many people.

By media type : based on the type of contents

- Vlog- blog contents are video
- Linklog-Contents are links
- Sketchblog-Contents are Sketches
- Photoblog-Contents are Photo
- Tumblelog-Contents are mixed media format

By Genre: Based on the main subject

- Education, Political, Travel, Library etc.

Blogging and the Libraries: Blogs are fundamentally 2.0 and their global proliferation has enormous implication for the libraries. Blog enable the rapid production and consumption of web-based

publications. Promoting library services, resources and programs is becoming a lot easier with the help of a blog. Libraries not only collect and store information but also disseminate information. Library blog is a great tool to disseminate information as the system of dated entries makes it easy to the viewer to identify new contents. It can provide link to new websites in addition to other obscure and interesting sites that most people are unlikely to come across at their own. Gone are the days when librarians were using newspapers, newsletters etc for promoting library services. Today's librarians have seized the opportunities to market library services and resources through online media. Blogging acts as a cheaper means for promotion. Blogging software like Bloggers, Library Weblogs etc helps in creating a blog without knowing a lot of HTML code or working with complicated web template thus making the job easy. There is no. of benefits for the librarians and library users which are discussed as under:

a) Promotion of library events & services: Library blog keep the library user aware about changes and updates in library policy and programs. Library can promote its regular events. Providing information through blog is not only economical but also save time. The RSS feed can be set up for the blog to alert everyone to include headlines of library on their site

b) Library Resource Sharing: It can be used as a way of sharing the resources and information. Collaborative blogging allows community of people with similar interest to contribute to a collective beneficial resource.

c) Support to Community/Dedicated Users : Librarians are always looking for ways to offer value added services. New material like books, videos, CDs or DVDs can be added. Regular updating may serve the clients with common interest by setting up the topical display.

d) Filtering of information: Library blogs provide filtering function for the library users to avoid the information overload.

e) Information Currency: Blog allow for rapid publishing of information about new programs thus keeping users up-to-date.

f) Inviting comments and suggestions: New Book reviews can be posted. Readers can recommend new books by inviting their comments and suggestions.

g) Reference Desk : The reference team of library can communicate all sort of news like Schedules, shift reports, changes to information resources and other items of day-to-day library life. It is often difficult to alert large group like all staff , students, teachers and researchers through email due to overflowing inbox. A reference blog could help in this situation.

h) Impressive image: Maintaining blog improves the images of library and librarians

Conclusion:

Blogs are providing new mechanism for current awareness and professional development. Library services, resources and programs can be promoted online easily with the help of blog. It provides the opportunity to share knowledge. It only requires motivation and dedication. So it can be used to fulfill many aspects of library like library cooperation/Collaboration, and extending the library services.

Further Readings:

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