

**Original Research Article****Enhancing library users experience: A study****Vidya Veeresh Hanchinal^{1*}**¹SKM's J M Patel College of Commerce, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.**Abstract**

In the changing ICT environment, the expectations of library users have increased enormously. As a result, it is a huge challenge for libraries to render effective services to the user community at large. Marketing and promoting library services is an innovative task. It requires meticulous and continuous efforts to attract more users to the library. This paper highlights the innovative practices adopted to market the library services at SKM's J. M. Patel College of Commerce, Mumbai. The paper also emphasizes conducting effective research ethically and responsibly. Further, it advocates optimum utilization of library resources through marketing innovative practices to fulfill the goals of the parent institution.

Keywords: Marketing of Library Services, Innovative Practices, Academic libraries.

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1. Introduction

Every institution is unique. The vision and mission of each institution are different and are having social upliftment as their common agenda. Every component of an institution support and work for its overall development; libraries support the parent institution's teaching, learning and research programs (Jange, 2015).⁶ Library is one such support system in an academic institution which plays a pivotal role for enhancing the user's knowledge output. In an interconnected world, where information has utmost primacy, one of the key means to success and productivity is the optimal use of library and information systems (Jha & Pandey, 2021).⁸

The main goals of libraries today are to obtain self-sufficiency in their resources and to provide an optimum level of services to reach more potential users and encourage the use of library resources and facilities (Alemna, 2001).³ Libraries are considered as growing organisms; the content should be made known to the users by all possible means. Marketing and advertising are the means to propagate the

awareness of library resources to users and thereby enhancing the use of library resources.

In order to be successful, the librarian must proactively design library outreach programmes to reach out more to the library users (Adomaa, 2021).² This requires sincere commitment from library professionals. Their positive attitude towards marketing is a prerequisite of a successful plan and execution to market library products and services (Singh, 2009).¹⁰ The role of library professionals is critical and compelling in the digital era. It is essential for library professionals to market their resources and services. Publicizing its resources and services are a major step in marketing to attract user's interest and to enhance the image of the institution. Marketing of Library resources and services is an attempt to inform the users about the availability of library products and services and what benefits users gain from using those products and services (Friday & Godfrey, 2023).⁵

It has also been conceived as an attempt made to understand the aims of the library, needs of library target users through research and organizing the library and its

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services to meet users' needs as well as promoting the library and its resources and services to draw the attention of target clients (Aderibigbe & Farouk, 2017).¹ The libraries should adopt the changes according to the user's requirements to enable them succeed in their lives.

2. About JMPC

Jashbhai Maganbhai Patel College of Commerce (JMPC) is established in the year 1988 by Sanskardham Kelavani Mandal. The College is affiliated to the University of Mumbai and accorded Minority institution status by Govt. of Maharashtra. The College is listed under 2(f) and 12(B) of UGC Act 1956. It offers B.Com. (Aided); and B.Sc. IT, BMS and BAF (Self Financing) courses. The main motto of the Sanskardham Kelavani Mandal is to create a just and equitable society by helping the poor and downtrodden community.

3. Marketing and Advertising of Innovative practices and their Significance

There is a saying in Hindi, '*Jo Dikhta Hai Vo Bikta Hai*' that means, - 'To sell a product it should be made visible first'. This applies to library resources also. To make the public money put in to action by maximum utilization by the users, it is required to make the collection visible to the users by adopting various tricks and techniques.

Innovative and best practices in academic libraries are such marketing tricks and means which help to optimize the use of library resources. Marketing and advertising of library services is required to make a larger user base for libraries. This action from library professionals enhances the usage of library collection thereby helping students to excel in their academic endeavor. The excellence in academic and research largely depends on the quality of library services and availability of appropriate reading material at right time does help achieve the predefined objectives (Kumbhar, 2014).⁹

Academic Libraries face many challenges like funds crunch, trained human resource, infrastructure, and users with limited knowledge about library functioning etc. The role of library staff is at utmost important while implementing innovative practices through the means of advertising and marketing of the resources and services. Judicious knowledge about ICT tools/techniques, active participation of all the library staff and support from the higher authorities and involvement of all the stakeholders etc. are the main and challenging factors necessary for healthy initiation of innovative practices (Bilawar, 2018).⁴

4. Marketing and Advertising of Library Services through Adopting Best and Innovative Practices at JMPC

4.1 Users training programme

Undergraduates are the young minds who should be molded for nation building. Library is one such support system along with classroom teaching to do so. To achieve this, creating awareness about the advantages of using the library and its resources throughout their course is necessary. The JMPC publishes 'Library Guide' every year with all the details of activities, resources, services, and facilities. A formal Training programme is organized at the beginning of the academic year.

A physical demonstration is organized to make students aware about the variety of library collection in the library. The purpose behind organizing this event is to familiarize the library resources' nomenclature to the student community. Terminologies used for library collection such as reference books, reference sources, journals, magazines, yearbooks, directories, projects, theses, e-resources, encyclopedia, dictionaries, etc. are made known by the users. Samples of each one are displayed with labels and details.

The Outcome: Students get to know the variety of resources of the library, its facilities & services. The library users are trained in how to use information sources and conduct research ethically.

4.2. Library books' display

Tin first Law of Dr. S R Ranganathan – 'Books are for Use' is the main idea behind organizing the Books' Display. To promote maximum utilization of its own collection JMPC organizes Book display of variety of its collection available in the library every year.

The outcome: It is always observed that the number of circulation of books has increased soon after the books' Display. Students get familiar with the library collection and the students interact freely with library staff for their requirements.

4.3. Book review competition

Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the Body- Joseph Addison. Book Review is such an activity which engages the students in many intellectual processes. To promote and inculcate reading habits and reviewing skills among students, for the last 24 years the JMPC has been organizing 'Book Review' (Inter Class and Inter-Collegiate) completion for the students. The students choose the books of their own interest and present the Review in anyone of the following three languages: English, Hindi & Marathi. The students from across the colleges of Mumbai take part in this competition every year.

The outcome: This competition has not only helped in developing reading, reviewing and presentation skills but also develops the overall personality of the students. To quote one such example; a student who was poor in English language and had a stage fear is now a teacher at an International School. The involvement of library staff in mentoring through this competition has helped such students to overcome language barrier and excel in their career.

4.4. Theme based book exhibitions

The motto behind organizing various book exhibitions is to bring to the notice of the users about the library collection. The library organizes theme-based book exhibitions of its own collection every year for example; 'Literature Book Exhibition of English, Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati', 'Vatchan Prerana Divas', 'Marathi Bhasha Divas' etc.

The outcome: Students get awareness about the variety of collection. These kinds of exhibitions depict our cultural heritage and enhance the library's image to its users.

4.5. Reader's club activities

The Reader's Club has been started with a motto "Today a Reader, Tomorrow a Leader". It encourages critical thinking and engages students to share and learn from each other. The club has organized events like; Theme based Book Mark Making Competition, Theme based paragraph writing competition, Book Cover designing by reading a story and writing a story by seeing the book cover etc.

Readers Club of College has formed a student's WhatsApp group. This group shares book reviews, videos and messages about reading and its benefits. Also, students share book reviews of the books they have read.

The outcome: The students found that the bookmark competition was found to be fun-based, creative and relaxing. Whereas the paragraph writing competition was study based, thought provoking. The WhatsApp group engaged many students in reading and posting book reviews on the group and also sharing free e-books which benefitted others.

4.6. Research cell (RC) activities

The members of the RC committee comprise Heads of various Departments. Librarian, being the Convener of Research Cell of J. M. Patel College of Commerce (JMPC) has taken initiation of promotion of research culture among students by organizing 'Research Paper writing competition' for the students. The students are given current topics to write and submit the research paper. The students were given paper submission guidelines with a deadline. The guidance sessions on 'How to Write Research Paper', 'How to do Data Analysis Using MS-EXCEL' and 'Guidance Lecture for Power Point Presentation' are organized.

The submitted papers are evaluated by the pool of experts and the winners are awarded certificates.

As per the observation, the challenges faced during training the students for the competition are as follows: Lack of knowledge about the time and efforts required for the entire process, Lack of Research paper writing techniques by the students, Language issues like poor English, Difficulty in finding appropriate information, & Lack of knowledge about plagiarism.

The outcome: Series of formal guidance sessions and continuous informal guidance have helped the students to acquire the following qualities: Information search skills, Problem identification and formulating strategy, Questionnaire designing techniques, apply appropriate research design and methodology, various reference styles, Literature Reviewing skills, Data analysis and interpretation techniques, maintaining ethical standards for research and more over presentation skills etc.

4.7. Annual book fair

Prominent book suppliers exhibit their collection at the Annual Book Fair. This provides an opportunity for the library users to glance at the book before recommending.

The outcome: This helps the library to build evidence and need-based collection and helps in keeping up to date collection.

4.8. WebOPAC & mobile app

The MICM NET Solutions Library Software has been installed. The data of the library is accessed through Cloud. Students access the library resources through the college website as well as the mobile application 'Edusprint'. In the era of App based services, the Library Mobile App shows all the detailed history of use of library by the user from books issued to fine paid. The library database is maintained up to date. Students are encouraged to use the WebOPAC and mobile app by keeping the database up to date.

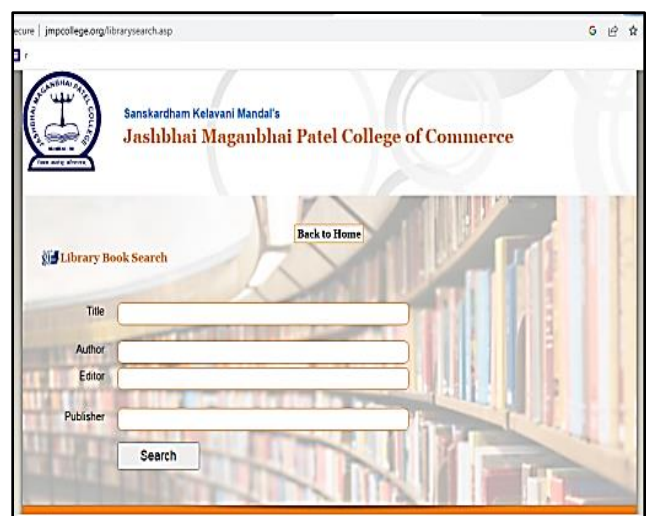


Figure 1: JMPC WEB OPAC

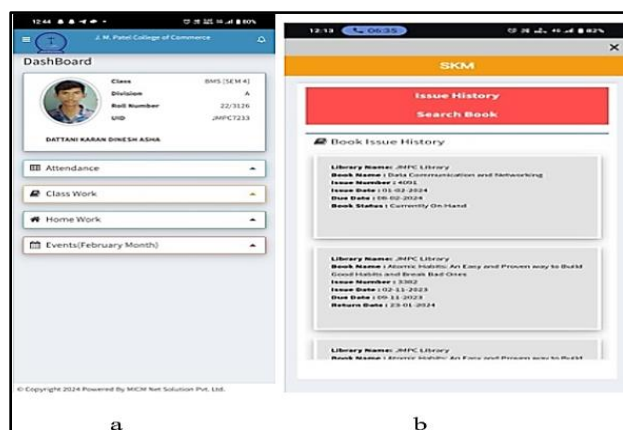


Figure 2: 3 JMPC Edusprint Mobile App

The outcome: Cloud based services, particularly library software helps users to access data 24x7. The Library Mobile App makes the users experience even more gratifying.

4.9. Student WhatsApp group

To use the technology to reach masses swiftly the WhatsApp has become an inevitable tool. To keep pace with the technology and trends, the Class-wise students WhatsApp groups have been created to share the information, notices, invitations etc., on these groups.

The outcome: Bridged the time gap in sharing the information and keeping the students well informed about the services & facilities of the library.

4.10. Pick-Up corner

The College library discards unwanted/ outdated resources such as, withdrawn books, old magazines etc. Students may need old books & magazines for their personal use like making projects, reading purpose and for their personal collection development. To promote re-use, the library organizes 'Pick-Up Corner' where these items are sold to students/staff/faculty at a very nominal cost before selling them in scrap.

The outcome: Collected amount by selling withdrawn books/magazines is again used for buying new books and also it helped students and others to build their own collection and use it for other purposes.

4.11. Question papers on website

The College website provides detail information about the library and its services and facilities. A link for previous year's question papers is given on the college website. Wherein bonafide library users of JMPC can access and download the question papers.

The outcome: The user-friendly website enabled Students/Faculty to access and download the question papers 24x7. Also, the electronic copy helped in maintaining green environment.

4.13. Best library user award

To encourage maximum use of the library and its resources the College awards "Best Library User Award" every year based on the following criteria.

1. Regular visit and use of library resources: based on the library software walk-in data and library usage records.
2. Obedience towards library system
3. The award winners are granted one additional library card for the next academic year.

The outcome: It has maximized the use of the library apart from creating awareness about the library resources and services. And also made them responsible library users.

5. Conclusion

To enhance user experience and knowledge academic libraries need to devise ways and means to adopt best and innovative practices through marketing of library services and facilities. Implementing the best library practices suitable to their academic environment is essential. Since NEP 2020 focuses on research based multidisciplinary studies on par with international level education system; the onus is more on academic libraries to serve the library users with innovative practices. Apart from becoming a support system for parent institution libraries also can act as knowledge hub for users/learners. The marketing of the library is continuous and throughout the year process. Proper planning and implementation with full force only will yield the results.

The enhancement of use of library resources needs tremendous efforts in this AI based era. The analytical thinking capacity and sustainable development of the same can only be done through systematic implementation of best and innovative practices at college libraries. Thus, it is suggested to adopt marketing strategies to promote library resources and services through innovative practices. The innovative practices adopted and implemented over the period at JMPC have enabled in holistic development of users.

6. Source of Funding

None.

7. Conflict of Interest

None.

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