

Marketing of Electronic Resources in IIT Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) libraries at Bombay, Delhi, Guwahati, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Madras, and Roorkee have been subscribing to over 15000 e-journals, e-books, databases and other e-resources either individually or in consortia mode and spending a substantial part of their acquisition budget for over a decade now. This paper attempts to study the marketing efforts being made by these libraries to improve the awareness and increase the usage of these resources. Marketing-related data were collected through a questionnaire, personal visits, and discussions with the librarians, and the usage data were obtained from publishers. Data analysis revealed that e-resources in all IITs are being heavily used as the number of downloads have increased from 32,33,818 to 75,23,371 reflecting a growth of 132 % over a period of 9 years. The IIT libraries adopt multipronged approach and use 27 marketing techniques to promote their resources. The study also showed that there were downward fluctuations in usage in different years. It is suggested that these libraries shall regularly re-look at the marketing strategies and techniques; study their impact on the awareness and usage of the e-resources; identify and remove the bottlenecks; and make additional efforts including interacting with the users to ensure optimum utilisation of these resources.

Keywords: IIT libraries, marketing, electronic resources, S&T libraries, India

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing means different things to different people. Many regard it as promotion and selling of products, and consider it as function which is peculiar to business establishments. However, marketing is not limited to selling and promotion, it is a continuing process and involves a range of activities such as identifying a target market, determining the wants and needs of that market with empathy and responsiveness, conveying effectively, doing everything to satisfy those wants and needs, and ensuring at the same time that this is done better and faster than the competitors to achieve desirable profit to the organisation and to the customers. Marketing also has great relevance to the problems and challenges faced by the non-profit organisations as it aims to achieve goals of better services and higher user satisfaction rather than the goals of profit, market share, or return on investment. Marketing for non-profit organisations is about service and adding value, and to be successful¹.

Marketing in non-profit organisations like libraries, involves activities conducted by people and institutions to achieve goals other than normal business goals, though it may use concepts and practices applied to business situations. Marketing is about everything that a library does or says. It is concerned with development of relationships with all stakeholders,

telling them about what you are, and what you do, and so on. While profitability may be its goal in the business environment, the improved service coupled with increased efficiency, measured by increasing use is the main goal of library marketing. Library marketing is a process in which users' needs for information and knowledge are identified and met through matching these against appropriate information resources and services. User satisfaction is the cornerstone of marketing library services².

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the Association of Research Libraries³, "marketing is the organised process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that will (if applicable) satisfy individual and organisational objectives. Marketing collects and uses demographic, geographic, behavioral and psychological information. Marketing also fulfills the organisation's mission and, like public relations, inspires public awareness and educates". "Marketing is about products/services you are trying to sell, or persuade people to use – assessing customer needs and designing products accordingly. Libraries operate a service and have customers – anything to do with promoting the library service and reaching out to engage readers in the community can be described as marketing"⁴.

“The real value of marketing is to ensure the survival and growth of the libraries and information services, which exist to enhance the communities they serve, adding value to the lives of the people and organisations who are their users, customers and clients”⁵. Marketing, therefore, enables libraries to establish relationships with users, fund-providers, governments, parental organisation, local groups, and have not only to satisfy their needs but also convince them for efforts/resources that are invested for the benefit of the user community. It also offers libraries the means to measure the customers’ satisfaction, respond to the public scrutiny, and educate the stakeholders in new ideas and issues, developments, and social awareness. Finally, marketing can ensure the survival and growth of the libraries and information services.

3. MARKETING OF E-RESOURCES

E-resources are those digitised or born digital publications that can be accessed via e-transmission. These web-based resources are more current than their print counterparts, are accessible to multiple concurrent users, support distance education, reach to remote and under-served areas and have no constraint of time and space and become invaluable research tools and complement print-based resources in any library. E-resources provide access to information that might be restricted to the users because of geographical location or finances. Through various search techniques, these resources can be searched, browsed and interlinked with other publications and databases, downloaded and saved in different formats for future use. In addition, they are convenient to use as these can be accessed from the library, internet café, offices or from the comfort of the homes at any time of the day. One of the biggest advantages of the e-resources is that they facilitate formation of consortia where group(s) of libraries join together to leverage their collective strength and to acquire large number of information sources at a very low price. Numerous studies conducted mainly in academic environment and focused on people's perceptions and preferences have found the rapidly growing acceptance of e-resources within the scholarly community^{6,7}.

There are still a significant number of users who in several studies in academic, public and special library settings have observed that they didn't know that their library or information centre had a particular resource or service and that they would have used it⁸. Effective marketing can help libraries overcome this challenge, reach to all their users and let them know that they have a large collection of convenient, easy-to-use, high-quality resources.

(a) Plan and Implementation

Similar to library marketing, e-resources' marketing also require developing a plan based on the input

collected from as many stakeholders as possible. The plan shall include setting out the goals and objectives, defining the market, setting up the communication channels and identifying appropriate marketing techniques, and evaluating the plan. Answers need to be developed to a number of the fundamental questions that are being planned to be addressed in the marketing effort like how to:

- (i) Get the attention of the users
- (ii) Enhance awareness of what is available and its value to users
- (iii) Improve the acceptance of the new resources and services, and
- (iv) Help guide users who are prone to search free web content first, to the appropriate library e-resources.

Understanding the users is also an important part of developing a plan. It requires putting some time and efforts to determine what the users think, want, and need. User surveys both in person and online, and interaction with focus groups can help in this. Some universities also engage specialists to conduct a thorough study to learn about their users or how they conduct their research⁹. The choice of location and medium of communication is crucial in marketing of e-resources. It is important to flood the market with the message. The more places a message can be found, the more likely that it is getting to their users. Equally important is to determine, what makes an effective message? The message should focus on the convenience and ease of use rather than the product's quality as users value convenience¹⁰.

(b) Marketing Techniques

Marketing plan needs to identify the promotional techniques best suited to the service, as well as the needs and preferences of the target audience in the media they are most likely to use. Not everyone acquires information in the same manner, similarly not all users can be reached with one promotional technique. A combination of multiple approaches for delivering the message are advisable but the message conveyed by each method needs to be consistent as perceived by users. Direct selling (Word-of-mouth or personal selling), print brochures, posters, giveaways, open house, workshops, library catalog, research guides/webliographies, newsletters, website, targeted e-mail, RSS feeds, course management systems, and advertising are some of the techniques commonly used by libraries to promote their e-resources¹¹.

In a review of 24 studies on marketing of e-resources published from 1994-2009, Kennedy¹² found 38 unique marketing techniques in use. She has grouped these techniques into four categories:

- (i) Human interaction (academic staff as collection developers, collaboration, collection policy, faculty/professionals as marketing tools, phone call/office visit, students as marketing tools, surveys, word of mouth)
- (ii) E-communication (blackboard, branding, e-mail (external and internal), feedback forum, home/office access, mascot, online social network, screen saver, usage statistics, webpage alert, customised webpage)
- (iii) Physical items (banners/posters, bookmarks, calendar, flyers/brochures, giveaways, incentives, newsletter, newspaper alert, pins, postcards/letters/direct mail), and
- (iv) Training (FAQs, native language education, patron training (group and individual), slide show/demonstrations, staff training (group and individual), use guide.

(c) Evaluation

Integral to the plan to market e-resources is a methodology to evaluate its success or failure vis-a-vis the intended objectives. It is very important to measure the outcome and identify what does and doesn't work. Increasing awareness of e-products and services may be laudable but it does no good either to the library or to users. What matters is use. Higher usage of a database, e-journal, or chat reference service is good for both the library and the users.

3.1 Marketing of E-resources in IIT Libraries

Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are known world over for their 'Culture of Excellence' and recognised among the best institutions of higher learning in engineering, sciences and technology. At present, there are 16 IITs out of which 7 IITs (Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Madras, Guwahati, and Roorkee) have a well maintained, resource rich, and highly modernised central library offering a package of services to their users. The library services in remaining 9 IITs which were set up in 2008 and 2009, are still under development. This study covers libraries at 7 old IITs who have been using web-based e-resources since late 1990s and their collection of e-resources has not only been steadily increasing but also being accessed by a large number of users^{13,14}. These libraries provide access to over 15,000 e-journals, e-books and databases in all major disciplines to their users and spend large sum of money to acquire these resources. A study conducted recently revealed that IIT libraries at Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Kharagpur and Roorkee spend about 2/3 of their annual budget to subscribe to e-journals and databases. IIT Guwahati spends about 49 % of its budget for this purpose¹⁵.

4. OBJECTIVES

E-resources have become integral part of the core collection of IIT libraries, they therefore, must adopt appropriate marketing strategies to inform, educate, entertain, help, assess, and monitor regularly so that the resources are optimally used by all segments of the user community in their academic, research, and outreach activities. The aim of the study is to seek answer to the following queries:

- Whether IIT libraries adopt a systematic marketing approach to promote e-resources?
- What are the goals of marketing e-resources?
- Do they work out a marketing plan and implement it?
- Do they have staff trained in marketing for this purpose?
- Is there a budget allocation for marketing activities?
- Do they get management support?
- What are various marketing techniques used by them and their advantages/disadvantages?
- Have they undertaken any study to find out whether the marketing activities have helped improve the awareness and usage of e-resources?
- Are they satisfied with the marketing activities being undertaken by them?
- Analyse what is the relationship between marketing and the usage of e-resources.

5. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The study covers 7 IIT Libraries at Kharagpur, Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Kanpur, Guwahati, and Roorkee. The data related to this study were collected during personal visits, interviews, and using a questionnaire. Websites and annual reports of the MHRD, IITs and INDEST-AICTE consortium were also scanned to supplement the above information. The publisher-supplied, Counter-compliant (an industry standard for usage statistics) data was analysed to assess the usage of these resources.

6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The data analysis revealed the following aspects:

6.1 Goal of Marketing E-resources

The main goal for IITs to market e-resources is to improve the utilisation of e-resources by all the users— students, faculty, staff and others, and to enable them to improve the quality of their academic and research output which not only benefits the institutes where they work but to the country at large.

6.2 Staff Training & Budget Allocation

One of the remarkable findings that emerged from the survey was that whenever asked for, they do get the management support in the form of logistics, additional infrastructure or equipment, for producing publicity material like pamphlets, brochures, banners, etc., and for organising training programmes both for staff and users.

None of the libraries have had separate staff, or specific budget allocation for this purpose. The library personnel (generally the librarian or his/her senior colleagues) undertake the marketing activities out of their personal interest, enthusiasm and commitment to better services to the users.

6.3 Marketing Plan

The IIT libraries have not developed a well documented formal marketing plan, nor they work out any marketing schedule. They however, follow a marketing strategy suitable to their institutional requirements.

6.4 Impact Assessment

They have also not undertaken any study to assess the impact of marketing activities on improving the awareness and usage of e-resources. However, they expressed the need for more aggressive and planned marketing to promote e-resources which could further improve the usage of e-resources.

6.5 Approach to Promote E-resources

The survey also revealed that IIT libraries use 27 out of 33 techniques listed in the questionnaire, to promote their e-resources. Table 1 shows the data regarding marketing techniques used by IIT libraries. It is evident from Table 1 that IIT libraries follow multi-pronged approach and use several techniques simultaneously to promote their e-resources. Some of the important techniques are:

(a) Library Website

The library home page is an effective tool for marketing and public relations¹⁶. Library webpages

Table 1. Marketing techniques used by IIT libraries

S. No.	Methods/technique	IITB	IITD	IITG	IITK	IITKg	IITM	IITR
1.	Banners/posters	√	√	X	X	√	X	√
2.	Branding	√	√	X	X	√	√	√
3.	E-mail/mailling lists	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4.	FAQs	√	X	√	X	√	√	X
5.	Feedback form	X	X	X	X	X	√	X
6.	Flyers/brochures	√	√	√	X	√	√	X
7.	Home/off-campus access	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
8.	Incentives	X	X	X	X	√	X	X
9.	Newsgroups	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
10.	Newsletter	√	√	X	X	X	√	X
11.	Online social networks	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
12.	One-on-one appointments	√	X	X	X	X	X	√
13.	Users training	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
14.	Phone call/personal visit	√	√	√	X	√	X	√
15.	Postcards/letters/direct mail	X	X	√	X	X	X	X
16.	Relationship marketing	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
17.	Slide show/demos	√	√	√	X	X	X	X
18.	Staff training	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
19.	Survey	√	√	X	√	√	√	√
20.	Usage statistics	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
21.	User guide	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
22.	Vendor's participation	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
23.	Web page alert	√	√	√	X	X	√	√
24.	Web page, customised	√	X	√	X	√	X	√
25.	Web 2.0 techniques	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
26.	Word-of-mouth	√	√	√	X	√	√	√
27.	Workshops, seminars	√	√	√	X	√	√	√
	Total	24	17	16	8	17	16	16

have a high visual impact on users, are interactive, and can provide direct links to e-resources like new databases announcements, top used lists, subject-specific lists, and creating a library blog where users can interact with the library. In a study it was found that 85.71 % of the IIT library portals provide links to access e-resources subscribed by them, while 57.14 % provide links to back files of e-journals, 42.86 % provide links to e-books and only one portal (14.28 %) provides access to electronic theses and dissertations¹⁷. These libraries also make announcements of newly acquired resources, trial access, etc. through their website.

(b) List Services (Serves) and E-mail

These list services aim to broadcast a message to a large number of people within the Institute or beyond the boundaries of the institute.

(c) News Groups

The IIT Bombay has several news groups which can be subscribed to by users depending upon their area of work and interest. The Central Library has created a news group where information about latest happenings as well as new services and sources is posted for wider dissemination. It also allows subscribers (users) to post their suggestions/feedback.

(d) Workshops, Seminars, etc.

IIT libraries regularly organise programmes to encourage and promote usage of e-resources as given below:

- Workshop on Optimal Use of E-resources, IIT Bombay, May 2004.
- Workshop on ICT for Information Management, May 2005.
- Workshop on E-resource and IPR Issues, IIT Bombay, June 2006.
- National Workshop on LIS Education in Digital Era, June 2007.
- National Workshop on E-resources Management for Excellence, IIT Madras, July 2007.
- Seminar on E-resources Management and North Zone User Convention, IIT Roorkee, 18-19 November 2010.
- INDEST-AICTE Workshop and Annual Meets Organised Every Year at Different Locations.
- Workshop on Meeting Users Expectations, May 2013, IIT Bombay.

(e) Vendors' Participation

One of the important methods of marketing e-resources in IITs is through active involvement of the publishers and vendors. It is different from vendors selling their products. They regularly visit the IITs 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 invited to give a detailed presentation about that resource followed by a live demonstration.

(f) Library Brochure/Hand Outs

Brochures, hand outs are another way to get the word out. Some of the printed materials used by IITs for marketing are posters, banners, charts and displays. IIT Bombay library has produced a colourful brochure which gives a complete list of e-resources along with their URLs. INDEST-AICTE Consortium, IIT Kharagpur and Roorkee have also published and distributed a number of displays and brochures to promote e-resources.

(g) Institute Newsletter

The IIT Bombay brings out a monthly newsletter called *Raintree* which publishes all the new activities and programmes of the Institute. Central library regularly uses this medium to publicise information about e-resources and services. Library Annual Report also lists the e-resources subscribed to by the Institute. IIT Delhi library also brings out newsletter for this purpose.

(h) Users Training

IIT libraries frequently organise training programs for different categories of users to train them to be efficient users of e-resources called 'Enhancing Users Awareness' conducted either by the library staff or by the representatives of publishers/vendors. It generally includes an audio-visual presentation and live demonstration.

(i) One-on-One Appointments

It is an excellent way to get to know the library users personally and to understand their information needs better. It also gives user an opportunity to informally interact various e-resources and other services of the library resulting in the enhanced usage.

(j) Relationship Marketing

The emphasis in relationship marketing is on close and frequent customer contact, and on providing value to the customer over the long-term, rather than in just making one-time sales, or meeting an immediate short-term need. This is nothing new for the library as good user service is at the core of our profession. Cultivating and maintaining good relations is directly related to users' satisfaction and will ensure their loyalty which is paramount to marketing¹⁸. Loyal users tell others about good services and resources-promotion by word of mouth.

(k) Word-of-mouth Marketing

It is more credible than other marketing techniques because only 14 % of people believe what they see, read or hear in advertising¹⁹. Surprisingly,

90 % of the folks will believe their family, friends, or colleagues who endorse a service or product because they know they do not have a vested interest in it²⁰. Library staff and key faculty members or community leaders can be utilised as proponents of the library's services. IIT Bombay, Guwahati, Madras and Roorkee get trusted advisors to use their services and then inform others about them. It saves time of the users as they need not to sift through all the clutter and using the benefit of someone else's experiences through word-of-mouth marketing.

(l) Marketing through Web 2.0

The application of Web 2.0 techniques require no major financial resources to implement²¹. Central library, IIT Bombay has put a video²² on You Tube that demonstrates a creative way to let students know about the library's resources and services. It also has RSS Feed – enabling the users to subscribe. It has also created its blog²³ to communicate and interact with its users. Their users can also follow them on twitter²⁴.

(m) Branding

All libraries have their own brands, whether they have been explicitly developed or present implicitly in the way library users perceive their services. The library website, where patrons are most likely to access these resources, shall be branded with logo on every page. Beyond the library's website, be sure that the e-resources in the library's collection are branded with library name even if one does not control the interface. Librarian can often work with a vendor or database's marketing department to make sure that his/her library name or logo is displayed prominently on their interface. All IITs libraries with the exception of Guwahati and Kanpur use this technique.

6.6 Usage Evaluation

Since higher usage of a database, e-journal, or e-book is a good indication of the success of marketing campaign, usage data²⁵ in respect of the

following e-resources from 2004-2012 (9 years) were analysed to study the impact of the marketing:

1. ABI Inform
2. ACM Digital Library
3. APS/AIP Journals
4. ASCE Journals
5. Ebsco Database
6. Emerald
7. IEEE Xplore Digital Library
8. Nature Publishing Group (NPG) Journals
9. Science Direct
10. Springer Link
11. MathSciNet
12. SciFinder Scholar
13. Scopus
14. Web of Science

Out of these 14 databases 10 are full-text databases and 4 bibliographic databases—MathSciNet, SciFinder Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. All of them are accessible to all 7 IITs except items at ABI Inform, Emerald, and IEEE Xplore Digital Library (not accessible to IIT Guwahati). Table 2 shows total usage of all 14 e-resources at IITs from 2004 to 2012.

6.7 Marketing and Usage Statistics

The following facts emerge from analysis of data in Tables 2 and 3:

- E-resources in all IITs are being heavily used. The total number of downloads have increased from 32,33,818 to 75,23,371 during 2004–2012 reflecting an increase of 132 % over a period of 9 years. IIT Kharagpur, IIT Bombay and IIT Madras are the three largest users of e-resources among IITs with an average annual download exceeding one million each.
- IIT Kanpur uses only 8 marketing techniques out of 33 - the lowest among IITs, and it appears

Table 2. Usage of e-resources at IITs

Institute	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
IIT Bombay	688419	1031467	921334	1111908	1188166	1366786	1413060	1449922	1251870	10422932
IIT Delhi	873850	943997	955766	851770	973434	1170458	959507	1031799	1167691	8928272
IIT Guwahati	75100	160138	228400	350717	443786	476694	451884	482879	501982	3171580
IIT Kanpur	296511	675325	766395	913749	1008828	1003190	990734	989732	871192	7515656
IIT Kharagpur	516579	692419	843680	1046741	1312923	1740544	1556504	1495662	1525925	10730977
IIT Madras	524635	1312718	1205759	1381990	1409103	1444460	1390752	1334907	1250838	11255162
IIT Roorkee	258724	465785	502883	605286	729560	815687	858419	832790	953873	6023007
Total	3233818	5281849	5424217	6262161	7065800	8017819	7620860	7617691	7523371	58047586

Table 3. Number of marketing techniques used vis-a-vis usage of e-resources

Institute	Total usage of e-resources (No. of downloads)	No. of marketing techniques adopted
IIT Bombay	10422932	24
IIT Delhi	8928272	17
IIT Guwahati	3171580	16
IIT Kanpur	7515656	8
IIT Kharagpur	10730977	17
IIT Madras	11255162	16
IIT Roorkee	6023007	16

that inadequate marketing activities have affected the usage which declined during 2009-2012. IIT Kanpur's total usage of e-resources in 2012 as well as during 2004-12 is lower than IIT Bombay, Kharagapur, Delhi and Madras.

- The usages at IIT Madras, Kharagpur, Guwahati, and Roorkee who use 16-17 marketing techniques to promote their e-resources have been on the upswing with minor fluctuations during some years.
- IIT Bombay uses highest number (24 of 33) of marketing techniques seems to have been successful and its usage of e-resources has regularly increased from 2007-11. However its usage in 2012 has marginally decreased. IIT Bombay library should adopt more innovative ways to market its e-resources to achieve higher usage.
- IIT libraries must examine on case to case basis all e-resources particularly those with large subscription costs and have been showing poor usage over several years for their continuity in future after obtaining the feedback from users.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The IIT libraries have been marketing e-resources among their users for enhancing the awareness and usage within the constraints of available resources. However, IIT libraries have to put more sustained efforts to further improve the usage of e-resources:

- Marketing in IIT libraries shall be made an essential and integral component of library functioning, and all activities covering promotion, marketing, publicity, public relations, advocacy, outreach programmes, corporate and media relations shall be brought under it. This will enable these libraries to have a comprehensive, well formulated and periodically updated marketing plan incorporating both conventional and modern techniques to promote their resources and services including e-resources.

- A senior professional with qualifications in marketing or who has been trained in marketing shall be given the responsibility and support for the services.
- Adequate funds shall be provided for this purpose to enable producing required publicity material or organising activities like training, seminars etc.
- These libraries shall regularly re-look at the marketing strategies and techniques, their impact on the awareness and usage of the e-resources, identify and remove the bottlenecks, and adopt innovative methods including enhanced interaction with the users to promote these resources.
- While marketing alone may or may not be responsible for increase or decrease in usage, and there could be several other factors affecting the usage of e-resources in IITs, the marketing does and can help in improving the usage if properly planned and executed. IIT librarians should continue to research and innovate their strategies to achieve the objectives.

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