

Branching out to a larger audience: Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) library marketing strategies in promoting Institutional Repository

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Abstract

Faced with the advancement of the fourth industrial revolution whereby users are technology driven, BIUST library repositioned itself in the financial year 2018/2019 by developing and implementing technology mediated tools as a means of enhancing service delivery. One of the tools that was developed was an institutional repository (IR) with the intention to store, preserve and disseminate the research output produced by both the university employees and students. Like any other library services, the IR needs to be marketed and promoted for its usage to be maximized. The BIUST library conducts marketing activities to promote and create awareness on both newly acquired services and products and existing ones for full utilization for better return on investment. This paper, therefore, focuses on the different marketing strategies used by the library to promote the IR, especially the electronic theses and dissertations community for both the internal and external audience and the anticipated impact of these marketing activities.

Keywords: Marketing; technology mediated tools; Botswana international university of Science and Technology, library; communication; institutional repository

Introduction

A wind of change on the delivery of information services and products in libraries can be traced back to the 1980's during the era of the "electronic age". The impact brought about by the "electronic age", that is the use of electronic equipment including computers, forced libraries to embrace this change by repackaging most of their information services from paper to electronic. Librarians had to reposition themselves from information specialist to managers.

Chandratre and Chandratre (2015) attest to this by stating that the library professionals had to acquire the knowledge, skills, and ethos that are adoptive to the innovative practices found in the digital era service delivery. This change coupled with the revolution in technology and the need for institutions to align their strategic objectives with scholarly communications which is more collaborative, computational and data intensive, hence the concept 'e-research' further mandated libraries again to re-engineer themselves by developing institutional repositories (IR). Thus IR's were developed as a way of managing, disseminating and preserving the intellectual output of universities or institutions. Information communication technology has contributed to improvements in research data management (Joshi A, 2013). Therefore, this means that librarians had to acquire research data management skills.

Why IR?

An IR is defined by Lynch (2003) as a set of services that a university offers to its community for the management and dissemination of their digital scholarly output. Faced with the advancement of the fourth industrial revolution whereby users are technology driven, BIUST library repositioned itself in the financial year 2018/2019 by developing and implementing technology mediated tools as a means of enhancing service delivery. One of the platforms developed was an IR with Electronic Theses and Dissertation (ETD) as a subset of the institutional digital repository. ETDs' are defined as theses for postgraduates' students including masters and doctoral students. These are theses that have been approved and submitted by the students at the completion of their studies to become part of the library collection. Moxley (2001) stated that ETDs' contribute to library collection building as they are critical component of institutional intellectual output "cherished academic genre. Across the globe, both the university's rank and the quality of the students graduated can be measured by the quality of ETDs' produced.

« the quality of a university is reflected by the quality of its students' intellectual products. Theses and dissertations reflect an institution's ability to lead students and support original work. UNESCO, 2001. »

The benefits derived from developing an IR's are holistic, that is they go beyond the borders of institutions, researchers, funding bodies and country. As indicated by different scholars (Crow, 2002a and 2002b; Lynch, 2003; Yeates, 2003) IR increases university and researchers' visibility and ranking; support research, learning and administrative processes hence improve efficiency; enable easy management of institutional knowledge; increased knowledge sharing; control over the digital assets of the university; enables the university to collate, manage and preserve materials and therefore derive maximum value from them. This is further elaborated by Jain (2012) when she opined that the IR enables countries to exchange information, whereas Christian (2012) emphasised that IR further assist countries that are faced with funding challenges as they can have unrestricted access to the global intellectual output on the web. Flores et al (2015) stated that government and funding agencies have great

interest in maximizing the return on investment hence requires the researchers to properly manage and share data for new developments.

ETD marketing strategies used by BIUST library

Marketing of library information services and product is something that libraries have been doing from time memorial. With the advent of technology, libraries had to realign themselves and their marketing strategies to meet the demands of the fourth industrial revolution. Library marketing activities can be defined as activities that the library undertakes to create awareness and promote uptake of the information services and products it offers. It is an opportunity for the library to drive the services and products to its clientele and in the process get feedback on how they can improve on them. According to Achrol and Kotler (2012) marketing principles applies to all practices of exchange of services and products between entities irrespective of organisational type. They further emphasise that key the component in marketing is consumption with the benefits being satisfaction, value and utility. This is in line with what the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) library intends to achieve with its different marketing strategies especially when it comes to ETD. The main purpose is to ensure that users understand the value of producing high quality work that would best sell them as well as the university across the globe through ETD collection in the IR. Moreover, to add value to the learning and research of the BIUST community by allowing seamless access to ETD that would ultimately improve the social-economic of the country through inventions and innovation. If all these are achieved, it would increase the visibility, prestige, ranking and public value of researchers and university.

When it comes to marketing, academic libraries are faced with challenges of selecting the most appropriate and efficient marketing strategies. The difficulty is found in moving from conservative marketing to a radical one. Perrin et al (2017) noted that promoting a niche digitised collection and IR is difficult as compared to marketing full-text documents or reading a book which users find more appealing. Dyal and Daniel (2010) and Potter (2013) recommended that to curb the aforementioned challenges a more focused community-connected approach model should be implemented to target users of the same interest. The BIUST library, therefore, deploys different marketing strategies to reach its various target audience guided by the library master marketing and communication plan. The marketing strategies are grouped into the following categories being:

- Reference service desk
- Social media platforms
- Technology mediated tools
- Stakeholder engagement
- Outreach programmes

- Promotional novelties
- Press release

Reference Service desk

The Reference Librarian being the contact person for library queries in a personalised manner is able to identify problems users might have either in accessing the ETD or unawareness of the availability of the ETD collection. The reference librarian is then able to conduct awareness session and training on one on one basis.

Social media platform

Social media plays a crucial role in redefining, reinforcing and providing access to content boundlessly. Furthermore, it enhances the teaching and learning as librarians can post both educational and informative threads / messages. (Young and Rossman, 2015) emphasises this by pointing out that libraries' presence on social media enormously makes library services and librarians assistance opportune, helps in community building. The BIUST library has an active facebook page which is used both as a marketing tools, and as a means of receiving feedback from clients.

With high uptake of social media platforms by users, the library developed a facebook page named BIUST Library in 2013 as a marketing tool to its clientele. The reasons behind this development were to move the services beyond the boundaries of the library and take advantage of facebook as it has proved to have a huge following since the inception of web 2.0 era. The facebook is used as a vehicle through which library users are made aware of the ETD and how they are accessed. Cloonan and Dove (2005) states that due to the notion that

« electronic resources are hidden and only those who know how to search for them can access and make use of them, librarians should capacitate users on how to locate them in addition to making them aware of the availability of such materials. »

The BIUST library has dedicated personnel responsible for Facebook management. The officer is responsible for running IR promotional / campaign messages. The usage analysis is undertaken to determine the uptake since inception of the campaign and the 'likes' currently sits at 3504. According to Phillips (2015)

« social media sites provide librarians with an avenue to engage patrons regularly and in ways have not been possible before, that is not rigidly focused on education»

A study by Madsen (2019) showed that a marketed digital collection received more usage in comparison to the ones not marketed.

« Using social media platforms to administer, distribute and disseminate information can greatly attract users and promote library usage in this information jet moving age. Library services can now be available to users on the go, anytime and anywhere, which have totally redefined library services from the walls of the library to the boundless spaces of the world wide web. Bakare, 2018 »

Technology mediated tools

The BIUST library currently makes use of available technology mediated tools when it comes to marketing ETD's collection.

BIUST Library Webpage and BITRANET

As it is, the library is in the process of revamping the library website which would form part of the library marketing strategies. Both The library webpage and BITRANET (an internal webpage) are an important marketing tool when it comes to sensitising and promoting uptake of library resources, products and services. Short messages on the benefits and new additions of newly upload ETD's will be relayed through the library website and the BITRANET so that the BIUST community is made aware of the new knowledge generated whereas the students can be motivated in utilising this rare collection. Dyal and Daniel (2010) and Potter (2013) opined that integrated marketing programs infused with messages have proved to increase library products and services usage.

Email announcements

At the inception of the IR project the BIUST library deliberately sent both group and individual email announcements informing the BIUST community of the development of the project and its progress. Part of the communication was to send requests to faculties to deposit their approved masters and doctorate theses into the repository and to make the students aware of the provision of ETD collection by the library. The email announcements proved to be efficient as the library received positive feedback. Currently the EDT digital collection sits at 40 with more to be uploaded. Email alerts for individual supervisors are sent out to make them aware that their students ETD have been uploaded. As a result, this adds value to the promotion of the collection.

Library guides

As a way of strategically positioning itself to make its resources and services accessible and known to its users the library developed library guides as a tool that brings together resources of the same subject in one stop shop. Each guide has been designed in such a way that it is linked to the IR link where both academic and learners can access ETD.

Stakeholder engagement

Faculty meeting

The library proactively attends faculty meetings, department board meeting as well as leveraging on the library-faculty liaison service to market and promote library resources and products. The initiative has made impactful benefits as faculties are now proactively submitting their ETD to the library. In addition to that, students and faculty members are made aware of the different benefits derived from ETD collection.

Open data workshops

The change in scholarly communication has provided an opportunity for BIUST library to market both the concept of open science, and IR including ETD to a larger audience. The workshops have proved to generate a lot of interest which positively creates a sense of ownership on the project.

Outreach programme

The library continuously strives to be visible and active in the community through targeted outreach programmes. Outreach programmes play a crucial role in different library setup especially when it comes to pushing the library services and products to the community. An outreach is defined as.

«the extension of services or assistance beyond the current limit or usual limit. Webster, 2019»

BIUST library in its effort in branching out to a wider community beyond its walls holds faculty outreaches and exhibitions. Different outreach activities are planned as per the calendar of events. These outreaches have not only proved to be beneficial in increasing usage of electronic resources and creating awareness of the ETD collection but has enhanced the working relationship of the library with the community (faculties and students). Through outreaches, strategic relationships are forged and nurtured. With the introduction of ETD collection, the library dedicated most of its time to making visits to faculties and students residential halls. The intention was to create awareness of the development and piloting of the IR including the ETD collection, its importance and how it is accessed. The below outreaches are carried out by the library marketing team:

Door to door visits

The library occasionally carries out door to door visits to sensitise the BIUST community of the services and products offered by the library. And through this initiative users are made aware of the ETD collection and demonstration is made on how it is accessed.

Library open day

This is one of the events that the library holds every calendar year. It provides a platform to make awareness of the EDT collection, demonstration on how to access them and answer any questions that may arise from users.

Commemoration of important international and national days

The library takes the opportunity to convey the message on the availability of the IR including EDT collection during commemoration of important international and local days. The participation of the BIUST library in these days is an opportunity for it to be part of the strategies for promoting collections and library services thus raising the library visibility. Below are some of the important days that the library uses to relay the message:

- My Botswana Week: Commemoration of Botswana Independence Day
- Open Access Week
- International women's day
- National library week– book launch
- County wide fairs

Promotional novelties

Traditional ways of advertising are also used by the library to reach out to a larger audience. These include making print posters on the availability of the IR including the EDT collection and scheduling training on how to carry out a search query. Sending out of brochures and flyers is also highly implemented as one of the marketing strategies by the library. The purpose of promotional novelties distribution is to target current library users as well as potential clients.

Press release

The BIUST library intends to send out a press release informing the public about the availability and the launch of the BIUST IR including ETD. Through this activity, BIUST library would be able to reach a wider community.

Anticipated impacts of BIUST library marketing strategies.

The developed master marketing and communication plan is envisioned by the library to bring forth the following meaningful impact:

a) Increased awareness of the library products and services: It is anticipated that these different marketing strategies will make users aware of the EDT collection, how it is used and the benefits they can derive from using them.

b) Increase Researcher / Student/ University visibility: Since the quality of university can be measured by the quality of products it produces including ETD it is envisioned that the ETD collection should be findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable to a wider community. This will not only be beneficial to the university's ranking and visibility but trickle down to the researchers along with investors and innovators.

c) Increased ETD usage: Through advocacy and awareness activities of the library resources and services including the EDT collection the library anticipates having increased usage of ETD from its inception. The library's dream is to have a new body of knowledge generated thus promote inventions and innovations.

d) Understanding and embracing of open science agenda: It is hoped that the ETD collection initiative by the BIUST library will give rise to an in-depth understanding of open science concept and equip both the researchers, students and the librarians with research data

management skills. More understanding will then give birth to the acceptance of open science and more ETD materials are expected to be deposited as part of the digital collection.

What could hamper the projected impacts?

It is important to note that the BIUST library has taken consideration of the challenges that are likely to be met in attaining the anticipated impacts. Limited resources in terms of having a dedicated marketing team, financial resources and skilled personnel's in marketing fields may hamper the progression of the envisioned impacts.

Conclusion

In summary having to market a niche collection such as ETD requires passion, personalised marketing efforts by a dedicated marketing team to keep abreast with the new development relating to digital collection and digital marketing. In short, resources such as human capital, time and financial resources need to be in place in order to carry out the different marketing activities successfully. It is recommended that the BIUST library should borrow a leaf from literature and incorporate blogs and wikis to reshape its website part as part of its marketing tool as it has proved to be successfully in universities that have implemented it for example University of Houston, National library of Singapore.

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