

Inspiring library patrons through an open book written quiz: an innovative library marketing tool

Narat Narayanankutty

Library & Information Division, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, India
nnkutty@gmail.com



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Abstract:

Libraries are transforming to satisfy the paradigm shift in information search possibilities impacted by the Internet, through a migration to virtual space. World over, libraries are pressurized by patrons and managements to prove the necessity of their existence. Being in a service oriented sector and having monopoly of holding information, libraries till recently never felt the need for marketing. In reality libraries are indispensable, as reliable information is never available free and in practice it is more difficult to locate in the Internet. To justify the necessity of its existence, libraries should use imaginative, clever and economic marketing strategies to win patrons and also to convince management. VSSC Library supports satellite launch vehicle research and development program of the Indian Space Research Organization. To promote online resources and to get best Return on Investment, a marketing drive was initiated in 2012 using an innovative tool 'Open book written quiz'. The goal was to inspire the library patrons to learn and use library products and services through a quiz program. There was no examination hall or invigilator to monitor the quiz. Patrons were free to carry the answer sheet anywhere they wanted, read the quiz guide with answers, consult - websites, colleagues, or library staff to answer the quiz. The intention was not to measure the knowledge but to impart more knowledge about the library. The innovative approach surprised the patrons as they received the answers well ahead of the quiz. A short survey rated this program as excellent and all 688 participants agreed that they benefited greatly by taking the quiz. This paper illustrates the new library marketing tool 'innovative written quiz' and a program called 'MyLibrary' which were effectively utilized to market VSSC Library to a large user base in just 11 days.

Keywords: Library marketing, Surprise marketing, Information literacy

1.0 Introduction

Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) is a premier research and development centre under Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), engaged in the development of satellite launch vehicles for the Indian Space Programme. Being a mission oriented research organization, the

centre has scientists, engineers and technical staff from all major disciplines in physical sciences and technology areas. VSSC Library is the largest Information centre under ISRO which caters to the library and information requirements of the scientific and technical community of the centre.

1.1 VSSC Library

VSSC Library was established in the year 1963 and currently houses 3 lakh documents in print format and has 4000 registered library patrons. Library currently subscribes to 705 (579 with online access) scholarly journals in science and engineering along with few popular magazines in the field of science, management and humanities. Since 2011 library started migrating from print to online for majority of the technical journals and at present 460/705 titles are subscribed as online only. As migration to online only resources gained momentum library also introduced next generation access tools like Web-scale Discovery Service, off-campus access, etc.

1.2 Shift from print to online

Library regularly collect usage statistics of print and online resources. It was observed that the usage of online resources is increasing considerably compared to the print. Similarly the remote usage is far more, than the physical presence of the users in the library. The reason for this change is certainly due to the availability of more online resources and change in the nature of activity of the users. There is a clear shift from the intense R&D to the more complex, development and troubleshooting activities. Due to the complex and busy nature of the work, library patrons are not getting sufficient time to physically visit the library. More over there is a tendency to collect web based information for instant satisfaction of queries. Comparison of the usage of selected print and online journals indicated that, usage of online resources is always higher than the print edition. However, considering the large possible user base, it was felt that online usage is to be boosted further to get best Return on Investment.

1.3 VSSC Library marketing initiative: a background

The new environment created by the shift from print to online and the introduction of next generation access tools demanded special attention to educate all library patrons. Investment made on the electronic and other information sources also need to be justified. VSSC Library regularly conducts formal familiarization programmes to promote its resources and services. The programme was introduced in the year 2004 and 50 were completed by 2012. It consists of lectures, demonstrations, discussions, and hands on training. The major drawback of the formal session is time and space barrier, low attendance, and restrictions in the number of services that can be introduced in a single session. Personal involvement of the patrons is also less in formal programmes. Library was looking for an informal method that can target large number of users and provide them with an element of surprise to attract and retain their enthusiasm. Space to introduce all important services of the library in a single event was also felt necessary. To keep hold of the excitement, the programme should be of shortest possible duration. It was also realized that successful library marketing requires the full support of the management. Every marketing drives initiated in the consumer market have some attractive element in the form of free gifts, discounts or bonuses. Hence for the marketing drive of library to be effective, it should have some kind of reward to attract users in large numbers.

As Internet is evolving as a strong alternative and competitor for libraries, particularly among the net generation users, the right method to attract the users back to the library is a meticulously planned, surprise marketing. A new marketing strategy was conceptualized, planned and implemented to meet the new challenges. It was designed to create interest in patrons to participate and get educated in the information sources and services of the library. The method worked well, and the programme with the slogan '*Inspiring library patrons*' enthused both patrons as well as library professionals. The tool used to inspire the patrons was an *open book written quiz*.

Today's marketing landscape is extremely crowded. And competition is not slowing down. To get the attention you want, you need to have more than just a clever idea. You want a message that is impossible to ignore. Like a surprise!

-Michael Tasner

1.4 Launch of the marketing event

Library wanted an occasion to launch the marketing event of this magnitude. Luckily the National Library Week of India was just around the corner, from 14-20 November 2012. Three major events were planned for the National Library Week. The open book written quiz named as Innovative written Quiz (IWQ), MyLibrary Open House, and a Book Exhibition with the help of vendors. Of these, the first two were designed to market the library products and services.

2.0 Innovative Written Quiz (IWQ)

IWQ is basically an open book quiz. Participants were given a number of options to locate the answer as the quiz is announced as an open book programme. In other words, users were given both the questions and answers. The idea was to get wider participation, as normally it is difficult to get participation for a quiz, which is conducted in the conventional manner. The goal was not to test the knowledge but to indirectly impart more knowledge. The attempt was to drive the user to the information sources rather than library driving the source to the users. When the users take personal interest to learn, the knowledge about the products and services will sustain in their mind and hence better usage is ensured.

2.1 Major products and services marketed through IWQ

The objective of the marketing drive was to promote the major products and services of the library. 31 products & services were introduced in the quiz program. More thrust was given to online subscribed content. The star product on offer was the VSSC Virtual Library (VvL) a space that integrates the subscribed online content and the next generation services of the library. Major services integrated in VvL are Summon Web-scale discovery, JournalTOCs (Heriot-Watt University, UK), library linked Google Scholar, and E-Journal Portal.

2.2.0 IWQ Programme

All employees of VSSC are eligible to become member of the library. To encourage membership a simple eligibility condition was set to participate in the quiz programme. *The condition was 'Should be an active VSSC Library member & should have borrowed at least*

one document before 19th November 2012'. Majority of the scientists, engineers and other scientific employees of the centre are already members of the library. The condition was to attract employees in the technician and administrative category. During this period 50 new members got enrolled to library. The participants were given 11 days to answer the quiz. The period was fixed from 9-19 November 2012.

2.2.1 No audience, No quiz master

There was no space and time barrier to answer the quiz. Participants were permitted to carry the answer sheet anywhere they wish, like sitting place, home, library, etc. There was no specific examination hall or invigilator to monitor the participants. Initially the participants were skeptical about this approach. But as soon as they understood the purpose, the idea was accepted and appreciated. Majority were thrilled to see a new approach coming from the library to educate them about the services.

2.2.2 Question guide

A question guide was prepared to help the user to find the answers. The questions given in the guide were exactly the same way as it appeared in the answer sheet. A description for each question was given in the guide to help the user to locate the answer. A link to the actual service was given if the question is related to an online service. The user was expected to visit the site by clicking the link, learn the features, use the service and find the answer. In most cases user will be able to get the answer by reading the description. Care was taken to make the description as brief as possible. The answer to a question may be one feature of a product, but the description will have all major features and the actual answer will be merged between them. The idea was to make the user aware about other features also while looking for the answer. The description also highlighted link to related products and services so that attention of the users is invited to all relevant activities of the library. Information like availability of more information in the library guide, library website, etc was also indicated along with the description. If a user need to register for the service, necessary link was provided in the guide, so that user can directly click and register for the same. The question guide was released one day ahead of the beginning of the quiz program. This was an intentional move to make the users read the guide well ahead of the actual quiz program. If both the guide and answer sheet were given together, a good number of users will try to locate the answer without reading the full description. Release of the guide ahead of the quiz was a *surprise to the users*. Interaction with the users revealed that many of them have read the full material at least once. *There were surprise enquiries from the users like 'the question and answer is already given in the guide and what is there in the quiz!!'* Library staff spoke to the respondents to find what they did with the guide. The answer was as expected and it was confirmed that they have read the guide and some of them two to three times. The objective was certainly to make them read the guide before they get the answer sheet. Thus target was met well ahead of the actual programme and the users got familiarized with the resources, services and product of the library by reading the guide. Many users indicated that they are keeping the guide for future reference and wanted library to update the same regularly and post it on the library site.

2.2.3 Answer sheet

There were 36 questions and total 50 marks for all correct answers. 35 questions were with multiple choice answers and the last question was to select and write three favourite journal

titles from a list of online journals subscribed by the library, which carried 5 marks. Majority of the questions had only one option as the correct answer. There were few questions where more than one option is to be ticked. The answer was treated invalid if all the correct options were not ticked. The instructions clearly indicated that there are questions for which more than one option will have to be selected to score full marks. Such questions were used mainly to illustrate the feature of selected services. This approach helped to make the participants read the guide in detail and visit the site wherever a link is provided. The first and the last questions were easy to answer and were framed to give pleasant surprise to the participants. This was to generate enthusiasm among the patrons to complete the quiz. Sample question guide and answer sheet is given in Appendix-1.

2.2.4 Reward for the winners

The success of any marketing initiative depends on the techniques used to attract the users. Management was happy to sponsor few rewards for the participants. 50 rewards were announced while launching the programme. The employees were categorized into 4 groups and rewards were ensured to all the groups to ensure wide participation from all the categories. The best of best reward was a tablet computer worth INR 20,000 and the top rankers in all the categories had an equal chance to win this reward. This decision certainly helped to foster great interest among all categories of employees and they participated in large numbers.

2.2.5 Special familiarization programme – Kick off to IWQ

A special program was organized to introduce the new concept of marketing by inviting employees for a talk on IWQ. All products that are covered in the quiz were introduced quickly along with release of the question guide and discussion of sample questions. All the participants who attended the talk were requested to give wide publicity to the programme.

2.3 ‘MyLibrary’ Open House

Library announced that all staff will be available in the main reading room to receive the users and clear their doubts between 14-19 November 2012. A simple inaugural function was arranged in the library reading room where Director (R&D) of the centre lit a lamp. Sweets and a pen were distributed among the visitors. The idea was to bring the users physically to the library and to show them that the management is also very much interested in improving the library services. Users in large numbers visited the library. On the last day there was big rush in the library to take help in finding answers to the questions.

2.4.0 Publicity

The success of any marketing drive depends to a large extent on its publicity. The programme was publicized meticulously. Strategy was modified by taking the feedback at regular intervals to ensure that the message is reached to all the employees and the idea is carried to them in the right sense. The planning of the programme was done by clearly indicating the interest of the management in the event to ensure wide participation. This was done meticulously by giving wide publicity to the activities using all modes and channels of communication.

2.4.1 Participation of the top executives

Library personally contacted all the top executives and succeeded in getting their blessings in the form of registration to participate in the IWQ. Separate mail was sent to each group indicating the participation of the chief executive of the group to which they belong, indicating all top chief executives from other groups. This initiative helped to create awareness among all categories that management is very much interested and the programme was well received.

2.4.2 E-mail communication

A new simple mail id 'mylib@vssc.gov.in' was created for easy and faster communication of this event. Users need only to type 'mylib' on the address line inside the campus and they will never forget this mail id. Mail was sent to all the employees announcing the programme, its benefits and rewards. The titles of the mails were carefully prepared to call the attention of the users and make them read the full mail and participate in the event. The short survey done along with the IWQ revealed, e-mail as the most important source of communication. Many patrons whom we met at various places did indicate that 'the e-mails were so tempting' and they could not avoid participating in the event. Mylib became very popular and users are currently using this mail id to communicate with the library.

2.4.3 Posters, circulars and personal communication

Information about the programme was circulated using posters, banners, circulars and through the word of mouth. Posters were displayed at all notice boards throughout the centre particularly places like cafeterias. Advertisement was also printed on the circulation slip provided at the library front desk while documents were transacted. The communications were designed in such a way that the simplicity and importance of the programme reaches the masses.

2.4.4 Publication of the list of participants

Every day the list of participants was published including the names of all registered participants indicating their department. When an employee sees his colleague is participating in the programme there is a chance that he also will register for the quiz. The group wise organization of the list also helped the library to send a message about the number of users participating from each group thereby encouraging more users to register for the programme.

2.5.0 Observations

Library could get information that users started discussing the programme at department levels and different groups were helping each other to answer the questions. This turned out to be very useful as a person with less knowledge about the library and its products were given help by his colleague who is a serious user of the library. This kind of approach is essential in the current environment where more and more users are remotely using the library and they will get help from their colleagues and friends easily than contacting the library which is physically away from them. Library could see users carrying the answer sheet and question guide to their home and also started getting many calls and many users visited the library to clarify their doubts.

2.5.1 Short survey

A simple survey was included in the answer sheet for the users to rate the programme. All 688 participants indicated that they benefitted by taking the quiz.

User Rating				
Excellent	Very good	Good	No response	Total
520	152	9	7	688

2.5.2 Usage of library resources and services

Library registered heavy usage during this period in the form of physical presence of the users, loan of books, consultation of OPAC, usage of online resources, and off-campus access. OPAC usage and off-campus access was all time high. Dummy accounts were created for OPAC and off-campus access for the benefit of those who have not officially registered for the same. Both these accounts were found to be used by many users. Heavy usage was also recorded for Summon, E-Journal Portal, etc. It was found that around 400 journal titles were consulted by various users. The usage is obtained from the 360 core usage statistics of serials solutions. JournalTOCs also recorded heavy usage in the form of number of accounts and followed journals.

2.6.0 Response of the users

The appreciation of the users was overwhelming. Many users called on the library and expressed their satisfaction and happiness on the programme.

2.6.1 Message from the top executives

Library received encouraging messages from three top executives and this was posted on the library website at the beginning of the programme.

2.6.2 Guest book

A guest book was maintained at the front desk of the library for the patrons to record their message on the programme. On the last day of the quiz, library requested the registered participants to send a message on the programme through e-mail. In just one hour library received more than 100 messages. All the messages indicated that the programme was exceptionally good and it was very useful for them. Many indicated that they were not aware about some of the services which they came to know through the quiz programme. Guest book is now published on the Library site.

Message from a Patron

Dear Library team,

Hearty congrats for organizing the celebrations in a way that made us to notice all the services, which many of us are not fully aware. I appreciate the spirit and the patience behind organizing the wonderful quiz and gently inspiring all of us to participate. Wish to see the active spirit continue forever.'

The feedback clearly indicates that the marketing initiative was a great success. Publication of the guest book was also a surprise to the patrons as their messages became visible to all. Some of these messages were their first publication!!

2.6.3 Answer key

There was a demand from the patrons to publish the answer key to the quiz. This was again done in a way to further market the library. The guide was posted again highlighting the answers instead of providing the direct answers. This was done intentionally to make users read the guide again to make them refresh the information on library services and products. This demand of the users also indicates that the quiz really enthused them.

3 Participation of young generation

An analysis of participation by age revealed that the maximum participation was from the young generation. One of the objectives was to bring the digital natives back to the library. Participation by youngsters indicates that the programme was able to convey the relevance of the library to the Net generation users.

4 Cost of the programme

The program was fully funded by the management and hence it was ensured that the event is conducted with minimum expenditure. Library submitted a proposal for INR 70,000 for the rewards and INR 10,000 for miscellaneous expenditure such as publicity, distribution of sweets, and organizing various functions. Management approved the budget with some modification. Approval was given to distribute rewards worth INR 51,000/- Library could complete the programme with just INR 57,000/- Staff time used for the event is not accounted in the budget as this was done as part of the job.

5 Valedictory function and feedback

National Library Week 2012 celebration at VSSC concluded on 20th November 2012. A formal function was organized to give away the rewards and also to select the winner for the best of best reward. The chief guest of the function was Director of the centre. Four deputy directors offered felicitations. The function was attended by more than 250 participants and guests. All important library services and their features were displayed for the information of the participants before the function started. This was done to further promote the services to the audience. Report of the programme was presented with the full details like planning of the programme till the final execution. Few participants were also invited to speak about the marketing initiative taken by the library. All speakers talked high about the programme and appreciated the efforts taken by the library to market the services. Participants who spoke also reiterated that the programme was very useful in imparting knowledge about the library services. The function was a good indicator of the success of the programme, both from management point of view and from that of library patrons.

6 Impact of the programme

There is a remarkable difference in the approach of the patrons after the marketing drive. Patrons were talking to all library staff at places like, on the office bus, at cafeterias, library

front desk and everywhere in the campus. They had all praise for the quiz and many of them mentioned that they learned a lot on marketing from the library. Innovative written quiz, e-mail communications, presentation of the programme, etc were well appreciated by the patrons. The messages received from the patrons also indicate clearly that the programme could achieve the goal set initially. There was demand from many users to conduct similar programmes in the future. The support from the management was exceptional and all speakers of the concluding session appreciated the effort taken by the library. The presence of the Director of the centre for the entire 2 hour programme was a clear indicator of the success of this venture and rating by the management. *This really inspired the library staff.*

7. Conclusion

Patrons are now well aware about the role of library and how it can contribute to help them excel in their activities. This programme could successfully demonstrate the relevance of the library in the age of Internet and that Librarian is the first and still the best search engine. Research libraries are considered to be the best in organizing and disseminating information. Research library patrons and information professionals are versatile in gathering and using/communicating information. Need for marketing of services and products in a research library was not felt till recently. 'Inspiring Library Patrons', the initiative taken by VSSC Library, proved that the right marketing technique will certainly yield excellent results and will help research libraries to win users and building new relations in the age of Internet. It is necessary and essential to make use of ICT to go out and meet users in physical as well as in the cyberspace, be with them, partner with them and work towards achieving the objective of the organization.

If you build a great experience, customers tell each other about that. Word of mouth is very powerful

-Jeff Bezos

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Appendix – 1: Sample Question Guide and Answer Sheet

Inspiring Library Patrons – 2012 Innovative Written Quiz - Guide

24. What is JournalTOCs?

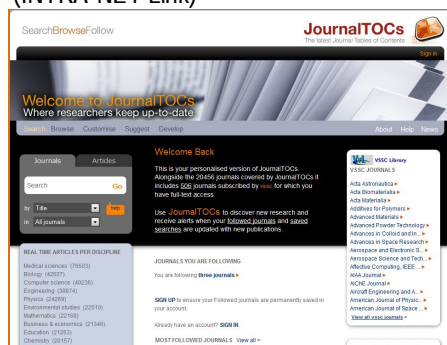
25. What are the features of VSSC JournalTOCs homepage?

VSSC Library subscribes to about 1000 technical journals, magazines, etc. About 800 out of these titles are available online. Journals form the bulk of primary literature and they are very important in research. Technical journals are very close to the heart of any researcher and hence they prefer to follow their favorite journal without any fail. In the manual system, following a journal is cumbersome as the user has to visit the library and track publication of the new issues of his/her favorite journal. Libraries are migrating to online resources in a big way. Online resources can be accessed without any space and time barrier. So is the contents page of online journals. JournalTOCs is a fully automated web based Table of Content Service to deliver the contents page of a user's favourite journal to his/her mail id as and when it is published. VSSC JournalTOCs service go one step ahead by enabling the user to access the full text of a favourite article from the contents page without coming to the Library. To achieve this JournalTOCs is linked to VSSC Virtual Library. JournalTOCs hosts contents pages of more than 20,000 journals published by more than 1200 publishers. It also hosts contents pages of Open Access Journals. Users are requested to visit the JournalTOCs site to explore its features in detail and make it a habit to follow their favourite journals.

Please visit: <http://www.journaltoCs.hw.ac.uk/>

INTERNET

- All are encouraged to register for JournalTOCs service to ensure that you are always updated with the new issues of your favorite journal
- It is necessary to have a personal Internet Email-id to avail full potential of the service
- Registration form [URL](#) (INTRA-NET Link)



Inspiring Library Patrons – An Innovative Written Quiz National Library Week 2012 – Answer sheet

24. What is JournalTOCs? Special

- a A site to publish an article in a journal
b A site to follow new issues of your favourite journal

25. What are the features VSSC JournalTOCs homepage?

- a Most followed journals at VSSC
b VSSC journals
c Upload an article for publishing
d Newly published TOCS