

## Revitalizing Library and Information Centers by Adding Value to Services

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### ABSTRACT

*Value-added services and products are in trend due to its capability to attract customers. It is an enhancement that an organization adds to its already existing/developing products and services before these were dispatched to the customer for consumption. This article describe in detail how library professionals can add value to its services and attract more and more users to library premises thereby increasing the relevance of library and information centers(LICs). It also discusses the necessity and significance of value-added services in an era where library and information centers are striving hard to sustain longer.*

**Keywords:** Value-added services, Libraries and Information centers, Significance of value added services in Libraries, adding value to services

### VALUE- ADDED SERVICES

Value-added service simply means adding value to services in order to make it more worthy to customer. The meaning of 'added-value' as quoted in the English dictionary (Cambridge Dictionaries Online) is "an improvement or addition to something that makes it worth more" Another definition excerpted in 'Cambridge Dictionaries Online' for the term 'value-added' is "Value-added products or services are worth more because they have been improved or had something added to them". Here the meaning of the term 'added-value' and 'value-added' is same, and the terms are used interchangeably.

In business world the term 'value-added' is different from 'added-value'. Business dictionary (BusinessDictionary.com) defines the term value-added in context of marketing as "creation of a competitive advantage by bundling, combining or packaging features and benefits that result in greater customer acceptance" where as the term added-

value is defined as “an amount added to the value of a product or service, equal to the difference between its cost and the amount received when it is sold. Wages, taxes, etc. are deducted from the added value to give the profit”.

Investopedia.com define the term value-added as an “enhancement a company gives its product or service before offering the product to customers. Value added is used to describe instances where a firm takes a product that may be considered a homogeneous product, with few differences (if any) from that of a competitor, and provides potential customers with a feature or add-on that gives it a greater sense of value.” The term value-added is also used as a marketing strategy to attract customers to a particular product or service by improving or adding something extra to make it more worthy or useful to customers.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF VALUE-ADDED SERVICES**

The significance of value added services can be evident from the manifold advantages it gives to an organization in revitalizing their competitive advantage which in turn helps them to sustain longer. With value added services additional benefits are enhanced to attract consumers to a particular product or service. It also focused on satisfying consumers' expectations maximum to buy their loyalty stick to one who satisfies them maximum. Customer care services are an outcome of value-added concept. Value added services provide multiple advantages to both the users/customer/consumers and the service providers like LICs. The advantages which increase its significance are given as under:

#### **Benefits to Users/Customer/Consumers**

- Gets special attention
- Gets additional benefits
- Their expectations are being taken care of
- Satisfaction level is high
- Guaranteed of being served better as compared to those who does not provide value added services.
- Services become more worthy and beneficial
- staff attitude is very cooperative

#### **Benefits to Service Providers**

- Profit-making organizations are able to attract more customers and can yield extra benefits in terms of money.
- Non-profit organizations like LICs are able to attract users to library premises.
- LICs get the opportunity of getting their information sources exploited at their full potential.
- Gets due respect from user community.
- Increases their relevance in the society.
- Users are ready to pay more if their satisfaction level is high.
- LICs are in a position to have additional income by charging fee for personalized services as users are ready to pay happily for such services which satisfies their expectations to the maximum.

### **VALUE-ADDED SERVICES IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTERS (LICs)**

Today even services are considered as commodity as many organizations are involved in selling and distribution of services thereby making profits. Information is a part of

information services hence it is also considered as commodity and many publishing houses are producing and selling information as a commodity. To promote information products and services one need to add some value to attract users or customers.

In the context of Library and Information Centers (LICs), value-added services refers to personalized services which make it easy for both the user and the library professional to access and deliver demanded information conveniently with greater ease and speed. This not only attracts users to LICs but also service becomes more worthy and beneficial to information seekers. Thus a value-added service in LICs aims at satisfying information needs of each individual in a personal way. Library professionals can add value to service by taking keen interest in users' information needs and satisfy them accordingly in a friendly manner. They can provide users greater ease to access any type of information, convenient ways of getting desirable information, extra unexpected attention along with preferred services by offering, healthy environment, friendly staff, proper guidance, updated information resources and good quality services. Libraries sometimes charge for such services and even users are ready to pay charges happily for such services when their information needs are satisfied to a great extent. It generates little income to non-profit organization like LICs to meet daily expenses of providing personalized services. Thus value-added services not only attract users but can also helpful in yielding extra additional benefits to service provider.

Kulkarni & Deshpande (2012) in their study has also examined five dimensions of quality service which includes:

- Resources: It indicates comprehensive in-depth collection of documents in any particular subject, un-interpreted series of journals, range of collection of CDs, newspapers of local, national and international coverage, and variety of latest journals etc.
- Staff: The attitude, behavior, etiquettes, decorum and dress code of the staff is also important for providing value added services. Wojciechowsk ( 2012) has also cited other authors (Bakken,1998; Gorman, 2003; and Grygrowski, 2001) for mentioning staff virtues as other factors responsible for generating value added services as knowledge and skills of librarians, their intellectual virtues, creativity and reliability.
- Services: The document lending, reference service, referral service, current awareness service, newspaper clippings, up-to-date catalogue are some of the important services which can be delivered more efficiently and accurately to provide value added services.
- Guidance: It includes proper signage, help, display of rules, location map, help menu for OPAC, user orientation programmes, information literacy are main apprehension covered under guidance.
- Environment of LICs: Environment aspect includes tangible elements of service quality like availability of computers, OPAC terminals, cleanliness, adequate light, proper ventilation, functional furniture, suitable library hours, library software and place for reading.

Mathews (2013) in his study has also given customer criteria for assessing value of value-added services:

Customer Criterion	Value Added by the Service
Ease of use	Browsing, formatting, mediation service, orientation service, ordering, physical processing
Noise reduction	Access (identification, subject description, subject summary), linkage, precision, selectivity
Quality	Accuracy, comprehensiveness, currency, reliability, validity
Adaptability	Closeness to problem, flexibility, simplicity, stimulatory
Time savings	Response speed
Cost savings	Savings, increased revenues, grow market share

Source: [https://www.sla.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Corporate%20Libraries\\_Matthews.pdf](https://www.sla.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Corporate%20Libraries_Matthews.pdf)

Keeping in mind various suggested criteria and dimension one can easily judge what is required for adding value to services. Besides basic routine jobs library staff needs to take personal interest in fulfilling information needs of the users in every possible way.

#### **ADDING VALUE TO SERVICES IN LICs**

Today, service quality is one of the most important factors in any business as well as in all service sectors. The quality is measured from customers' point of view as customers are considered as the 'greatest asset' for any organization. (Kulkarni & Deshpande, 2012). Therefore meeting and exceeding customer requirements or expectations is essential to succeed. Value-added Services in context of LICs are all those additional services which are provided to the users apart from the basic routine services like classification and cataloguing of information of resources, issue and return of book, OPAC services, lending books, reference services etc. Adding value occurs through a set of various library processes including gathering, archiving, cataloguing, classifying and organizing the resources and information background, facilitating access to various contents, as well as providing, completing, using and promoting them. User communication training and the animation of the public space to facilitate local networking are other additional processes to provide value-added services. (Wojciechowski, 2012).

Wojciechowski, (2012) further describes two major sources for generating the added value in librarianship, namely the staff, librarians and information specialists, and all the processes enriching the inventory and facilitating the services. As per his opinion it is only the staff that adds the value by gathering the resources and information, configuring and reconfiguring them, as well as processing, completing, transforming, using and promoting their content. The addition of value also takes place whenever a service is delivered in a suitable manner. The better the quality of service, then the greater the value added.

To provide value-added services library professionals need to look for the ways which not only increase convenience but also provide greater speed and ease in accessing and retrieving relevant information in ones particular area of interest. The ways by which library professional can add value to services, not necessarily limited to routine services are discussed as under:

- By providing training to library professionals and staff to enhance performance when it comes to locating & delivery of information in different forms and format
- By keeping track of users' information background and maintaining information content-wise, current topic-wise and subject wise.
- Repackaging of information sources as per users requirement
- User orientation program on regular basis to make users aware of sources and service library is delivering.
- Guidance to users in accessing and locating information through advance search and also guiding them in writing articles and references especially to students and users.
- Developing competitive advantage to compete with other in the market place where other like professionals ICT experts, software engineers, programmers are overtaking this profession by providing customized information services as per user requirement. When speed, accuracy, and relevance are essential to information systems, utilizing the expertise of computer scientists is unavoidable. Therefore, librarians and information scientists need to explore ways to interact more closely with computer experts. They should need to try to identify ways and methods of adding value to information systems. (Fattahi & Afshar, n.d.)
- By developing virtues like knowledge, skill, politeness, ready-to-serve attitude, honesty, humbleness in staff to offer value-added services.
- By providing healthy environment in LIC's premises to attract users.
- By improving document delivery services so as to make information available right at the doorstep of users.
- By conducting user studies frequently so as to develop library's plan and collections accordingly.

Steffey (2011) has suggested 10 ways to add value to services as 1. Providing expert advice and a tremendously high level of professionalism 2. Bundling and packaging 3. Service levels. 4. Frequent buyer programs. 5. Transition and education. 6. Recognition and reward levels. 7. Qualitative preference 8. Dedicated personnel 9. Speed of service or delivery 10. Insider information

## CONCLUSION

Libraries survival totally relies on its efficiency to produce, select, organize, store and disseminate information sources and its maximum consumption. Therefore libraries need to adopt or develop strategies that are helpful in curbing all hindrances in this regard. Value-added services are such initiative that may be taken in this direction. Libraries can add value through variety of library processes like selecting, collecting, cataloguing, classifying and organizing the resources, archiving, facilitating greater ease in accessing information, speedy delivery etc. User studies and regular user-staff interaction program are other additional ways to improve quality of services. With this library professionals can add value to services and they can take keen interest in fulfilling information needs of different sections of the society. This will not only increase the relevance of the library but also helpful in attracting users to the library premises. Hence, value-added services are an absolute for the future survival of libraries and library professionals.

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