

CO-CREATING LIBRARY SERVICES VALUE FOR BUSINESS AND MARKETING STUDENTS

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Background

Within the last decade academic libraries have embraced the need to assess and evaluate library services, especially as they relate to instruction, usability, and quality of service (Shi and Levy, 2005). In typical academic libraries, user needs are ultimately tied to success in course work that ultimately leads to graduation. While useful research has been completed that demonstrates academic library impact upon student persistence (Emmons and Wilkinson, 2011), no work has been done to understand student corresponding needs related to their development as library users and researchers. Specifically, no effort has been made to connect specific library resources and services with business student needs along with the role that fulfilling those needs play in attaining educational success. Research shows a need to devise a process for communicating with students in narratives based upon needs and value perceptions as they move from inexperienced library users to familiar ones that eventually gain expertise in terms of utilization of the library and its services (Germano, 2010).

There has been movement via AACSB (Association of Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) to include research as an important part of business education. Hawes (1994) found AACSB embracing bibliographic instruction to improve academic quality. From there it moved to incorporate the idea of information literacy via the use of information technologies and systems and finally to commissioning a 2008 *Impact of Research* report reprinted in 2012. (AACSB, 2012) This recent study explored why scholarly inquiry matters; however, there has not been explicit focus on “library research skills” and its relationship to the value to schools, faculty, and student’ success.

Over the years, several authors (Littlejohn and Benson-Talley, 1990; Culley et al., 1977; Zabel, 2004) found students fell into a poor-unsatisfactory range when asked to identify appropriate sources to answer specific business questions. Reasons noted center around students demonstrating weak abilities to successfully understand and use secondary information. Other issues noted were lack of planning for searches, not setting aside sufficient time, inability at recognizing relevant information sources, inability to perform/conduct major research projects, and academic faculty assuming students have high levels of information search capabilities

(Rutledge and Maehler, 2003; Grimes and Charters, 2000; Kimball, 1999). Related to this, it was found that 75% of undergraduate students suffered from library anxiety (Onwuegbuzie and Jiao, 1998). Integrating library instruction session has been shown to reduce library anxiety, increases students' ability to use library resources and strengthens the relationship between library staff and students resulting are positive outcomes with effect library pedagogy (Korobili and Tilikidou, 2005; Prince and Helms, 1993; Rutledge and Maehler, 2003).

Senior, Wu, Martin, and Mellinger (2009) investigated marketing class students' attitudes toward and knowledge of library services and collections. They found that students were more likely to believe in the importance of library research, to have had library instruction and to use websites and internet search engines to begin their research. However they are less likely to consult business periodicals as they were not always effective in utilizing secondary research efficiently. Cooney (2005) asserted that business information literacy instruction, while widespread and prevalent, is still developing and that collaboration between librarians and business faculty is overwhelmingly described as moderate. Even though Prince and Helms (1993) found library instruction did indeed lead to improved project performance, increased faculty and student satisfaction, and reduced student fear of using library resources, there has not been an investigation to assess how the library can add value to the business education process. The studies focus was to explore the value library research skills add to business and marketing student success while applying market research methodology and tactics to better understand the role the library plays in meeting business and marketing student degree attainment needs.

Methodology

During spring quarter 2012, at a west coast four year-University, five intercepts and eight focus groups were conducted on various library value adding topics to gain insight into what business students' value relative to the university library. The five intercepts with approximately 120 business students respondents to each intercept were conducted weekly consisted of five to six questions on the following topics: 1) Student Success and the Library, 2) Library Services, 3) Research Skills, 4) Library Utilization, and 5) Campus Data Base Usage. From the intercepts, students were selected to participate in eight focus groups grouped into the following three categories: 1) research process and tools available especially comparing Google and library databases 2) library usage and value and 3) student priorities, critical needs and obstacles to success. The main goal of the focus groups was to determine how students conduct research and the value of different research options available to them, how they utilized the library, and

how students approached research to deal with the academic and life demands. Sixteen to nineteen students participated in each focus group receiving a \$10 or \$20 Starbucks gift card for their time and participation.

Results

Overall intercept results indicated students strongly agreed that they needed research skills to achieve success as a student and professional. In all cases, marketing students more strongly agreed with the statements compared to business students. Marketing students more strongly agreed than non-marketing students the use of library resources and usage of non-library resources impacted their grade. Conversely, marketing student tended to regard the opportunity to develop research and business analytical skills via library resource utilization and application of business and marketing database resources compared to other results via convention search engine activities as less important compared to other business students.

Business students mildly agreed with the need to utilize the library. The marketing students tended to believe the library was not inviting and were less likely to seek out and utilize library database resources due to their complexity versus the ease of Google based searches than other business students. Further marketing students were less likely to believe library database utilization would impact their course grades, their success as a student and thus in their chosen career and thus profession.

The focus groups indicated students agreeing that online search engines were helpful to clarify topics and begin the research process. Many felt that the content they found did not always appear to be reliable or credible but still utilized Google out of habit. Students tended to see the library as a place to congregate or relax versus resources; but due to operational issues such as hours of operation, lack of comfortable seating, lack of computer availability, and noise level issues they choose not to utilize the library. Other personal issues related to school, future careers, and personal lives further negatively impacted the student's library usage rate.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The majority of the results support that marketing students are not that different from other business students in the value they see the library providing. A significant variable, "getting help with research is important to my success as a student" was the highest agreed upon statement for marketing students. It supports the fact that marketing students have gotten the message that secondary sources are necessary to complete many marketing assignments/projects.

Given all business students saw the need for research information to influence their success as a student and in their career; it was a concern that marketing students responses tended to be the same or lower on the majority of those questions. This brings to light the inconsistency among marketing students regarding the need for research skills regarding library held information sources and thus the value of the library. Further investigation into why the inconsistency exists needs to be identified as the authors felt there would have been consistency between getting library research help and its impact on their student and career success. Action plans need to be developed to clearly establish the relationship between library's research value and student academic and professional career success in the minds of marketing students.

Creating the library's value proposition in the minds of the student is a double edge sword. Even though students understand and acknowledge the need for research and that the library might be one of the places to secure that information, most students responded neutrally to the physical library facilities and library services. These insights emphasizes the need for collaboration between library and business college faculties and administrators to meet the student needs and wants. A simple example is that most business classes required group projects, yet there is little attention given to how to facilitate that process to meet student needs both within the library and the courses. Students do not distinguish between library services, academic requirement and thus academic services. Future actions need to be focused on how to address these service gaps if the library's value in the academic process is to be fully understood and addressed.

Per Germano and Stretch-Stephenson (2012), libraries need to define their value proposition and sell it to their users. The results of the study indicate students acknowledge the need for research and library skills; however, do not associate library services with the facilitation and development of those research skills (i.e. library training sessions, libguides, technology usage, databases, etc.). As Cooney (2005) indicated collaboration between librarians and business faculty is overwhelmingly moderate. The author's agree that students seem to have mixed expectation regarding the need to learn research library skills, how they should be learned, and who is responsible to imparting these skills; thus highlighting the need to understand the existing collaboration efforts between business and library faculty and administration. Students acknowledge research, library skill needs; however, it is clear there is not a value proposition for creating and delivering those skills that is shared by the faculty and administration.

If there is to be true integration of the library's value added proposition into student success, there must be collaboration between business and library faculties and administration. Today's "new economy" students expect cross-functional integration to exist seamlessly between academic requirements and the availability of library support or value. Future research is needed to focus on the gaps in providing collaborative service efforts between marketing and library faculties and students and how the library fits into a collaborative academic effort to truly understand the library's value proposition relative to marketing student academic success.

References available upon request