

Using Library Statistics to Inform, Promote, and Advocate Library Services for New Generation Users

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USING LIBRARY STATISTICS TO INFORM, PROMOTE AND ADVOCATE LIBRARY SERVICES FOR NEW GENERATION USERS

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Abstract

This paper is based on a case study of how the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) is actively using library statistics to promote and advocate for better library services for its users in a new digital environment.

At CPUT Libraries we realized that we need to promote our activities, determine our return on investment and show what value we add to the lives of our clients. This could be determined by the increase in the quality of work done and services used by the different user market segments. Four market segments have been identified namely, CPUT management, library staff, faculty and students.

For each type of client statistics have to be used differently in order to be meaningful. Students today are largely part of Generation Y, otherwise known as the Net generation. They are digitally native and largely prefer to learn from peers rather than authority figures. It is generally accepted that they respond better to buzz marketing and want to be directly involved, i.e. stimulated, engaged and empowered during the marketing process.

This paper will look at a number of ideas implemented in 2011 and planned for 2012, for example, including advanced analysis presented simply and graphically for institutional programme reviews, the concept of the E-book fair resulting directly from usage statistics, "Library @ a glance pamphlets", etc.

Key findings are also included.

Key words: Marketing, Statistics, Net generation, Advocacy, Market segmentation

Introduction

Utah State Library suggests "Avoid presenting library statistics only at budget time. They should be used continuously; your audience should get used to seeing information about the library"

At CPUT Libraries we realized that we need to promote activities, determine return on investment and show the value added to the lives of clients.

It has also been noted that improving the usage of the library's services could best be achieved through focused and user-orientated marketing. Statistics and Marketing have thus been identified as strategic objectives represented in both the strategic and operational plans of the library and provided with professional staff to develop these functions.

Statistics would be used to support the marketing of specific services the results of which would be analysed to determine the value of the marketing initiatives.

Market Segmentation

Market segmentation addresses the question of who the customers are and is a tool used to identify specific characteristics of the intended audience or market. It provides the marketing and advertising campaign with a clear view of:

1. Market boundaries in accordance with University strategy

2. Fundamental needs of users
3. Which segment characteristics we address with our products
4. how the marketing plan should be designed and
5. the best features of the product which speaks to the segment characteristics, thus increasing the appeal to the targeted segment. This will then determine the best method to reach the intended group.

Four market segments were identified namely: CPUT management, library staff, faculty and students.

Not only would a different marketing approach be needed for each segment, but for each type of client statistics have to be used differently in order to be meaningful. A functional tactic in marketing is to ensure the 'profitable sale' of the company's product and services, so that the long term goals of the company is achieved. Therefore, the Library Marketing Unit needed to analyze and understand their market, especially the student population. Considerations included:

- the lifestyle of the user
- perception of the library as place,
- language skills,
- age,
- Information searching/seeking behaviour,
- existing literacies and illiteracies
- trends in a particular faculty or discipline
- social networking and teaching platforms
- the level of 'searching skills' of the lecturers which directly influences the standard of information literacy amongst students and
- Multiculturalism and multilingualism which are especially important in the South African context

Key concepts when presenting statistics to the selected market segment include:

- offering statistics in context in order to be meaningful and easy to interpret
- ensuring the statistics used suit the audience and purpose
- using graphical representations rather than text to speak to specific types of users
- factual and well-balanced presentations
- incorporating real life examples within the recognized framework for each type of user

1. Statistics and marketing for CPUT Management

Marketing for this segment is done mainly through the Library's Annual Report and other motivations based on statistics and strategies. In presenting statistics to CPUT management, the library uses various strategies including:

- portraying the statistics from the user's point of view,
- creating comparisons with similar libraries, or across branches of the CPUT libraries,
- analyzing current and projecting future trends,
- indicating the affects of inflation and
- putting the library in context.

Using statistics to determine service hours

During 2010 students demanded an extension of library hours. CPUT Management conceded to the demand and all libraries were opened until 10 p.m. for a pilot period of six months. Using library statistics indicating the usage of services during the extended hours as well as the number of users visiting the library during this period, CPUT Libraries could pinpoint exactly which branch libraries needed to be open until 10 p.m. and which did not. The library was able to motivate for changes resulting in revised opening hours according to the needs of each individual library. The marketing of the new hours was done at the beginning of 2012.

2. Statistics and marketing for Library staff

In 2009 the position of Librarian: Quality Assurance was instituted and a process developed for the monthly reporting of statistics by staff. Although staff were required to provide statistics on a monthly basis, they did not see how these were used and the statistics appeared meaningless to staff.

In 2010, the Quality Assurance Librarian developed a statistical database for the recording of annual statistics as required by Library and University Management and the inputting of monthly statistics online by staff. It also provides the "official" statistics to be used by library staff when dealing with faculty or writing reports.

The development of the database ensured that staff would be able to access a variety of statistics ranging from budget details, number of students at a branch, usage of electronic materials to circulation statistics in one place. Staff would be able to follow trends by comparing statistics for various months or years and be able to identify areas of excellence or those needing development. Access to current and accurate statistics therefore supports library staff as key role players in the marketing of library services.

The collaboration activities of faculty librarians, besides the marketing initiatives they bring to the table, includes using training programs to identify gaps in market segments as well as provide direction in how to target specific users. Some library staff are involved in a lecturing capacity within academic departments. Librarians are all qualified to train students and can deal with lecturing staff as equals enabling them to market the library as an active teaching unit and not just a support unit.

Detailed statistics about library training sessions are recorded, ensuring in-depth understanding of the groups of students being trained, the type of training done and the amount of time spent by individual librarians preparing for and presenting training sessions. Not only does this information assist the library when planning future training sessions, but also creates an understanding of the type of training needed within each department.

Circulation desk staff are often considered as being the 'face of the library' and are the first point of contact when a patron has an information query. They are therefore key role players and their support is essential to an effective marketing campaign. It has been observed that the level of dedication to the marketing initiatives shown by circulation staff could impact the level of success of a promotional or advertising campaign.

3. Statistics and marketing for faculty

In the South African higher education structure faculty reviews occur every two to three years. There are two types of faculty reviews, those by the Department of Higher Education and Training and those by Professional Associations. The services provided by the library are a very small part of such reports and are normally a sketch by the relevant librarian giving an overview of library hours and the number of books available for the selected course.

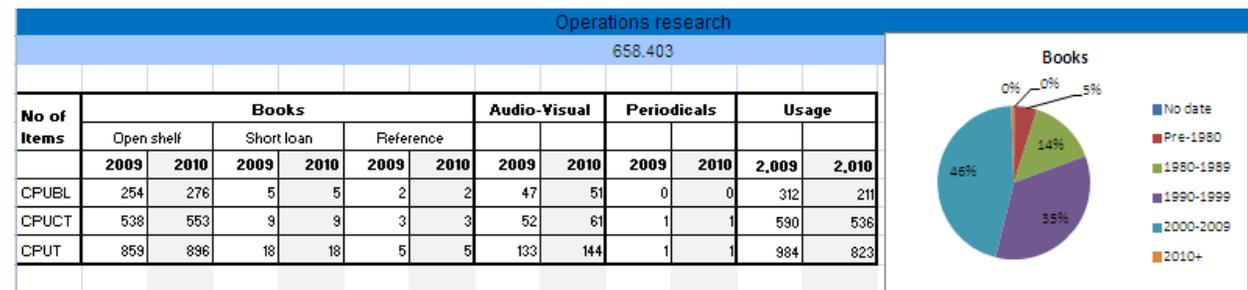
In 2010 the library made a decision that these reports should be standardized so that each librarian included the same types of information in the report and that all statistics used in the report would be provided by the Quality Assurance Librarian ensuring that data provided to faculty would be accurate and consistent.

An investigation was done into what was expected from the library and a report developed. The report contained general information about the library, but also included a detailed breakdown of the printed collection and its usage.

The breakdown was done per subject area (based on Dewey range) covered by the course, indicating the number of items at each branch at which the course was presented as well as the total number of items held by CPUT Libraries. The number of printed periodical titles was also included.

However, it was felt that these statistics were not complete and more detailed information was required, resulting in the inclusion of the usage of the items and the age of the items in the collection. At a glance faculty members or reviewers could immediately assess the value of the collection and determine the relevance of the collection with respect to the course offered.

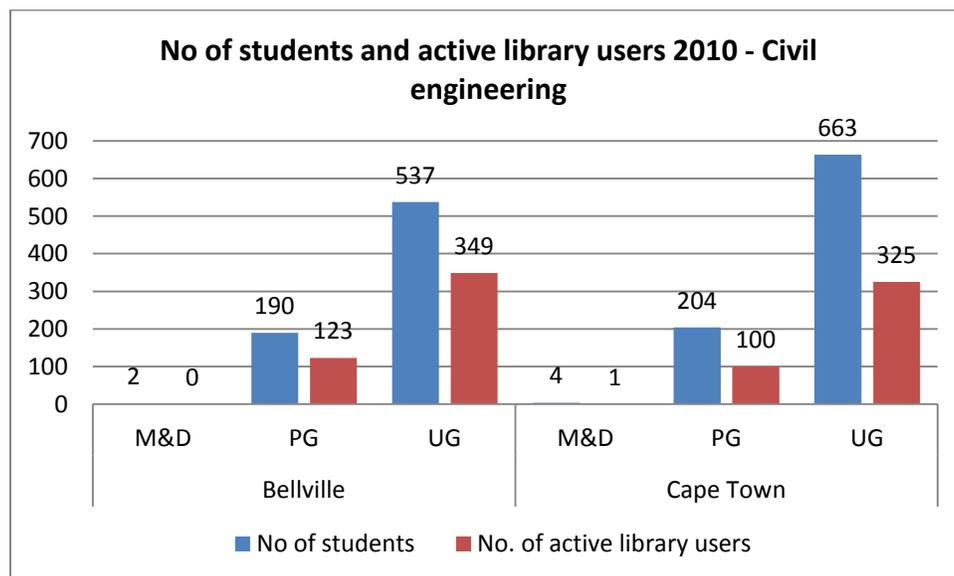
Table 1.



Example of the breakdown of the printed collection, usage and age

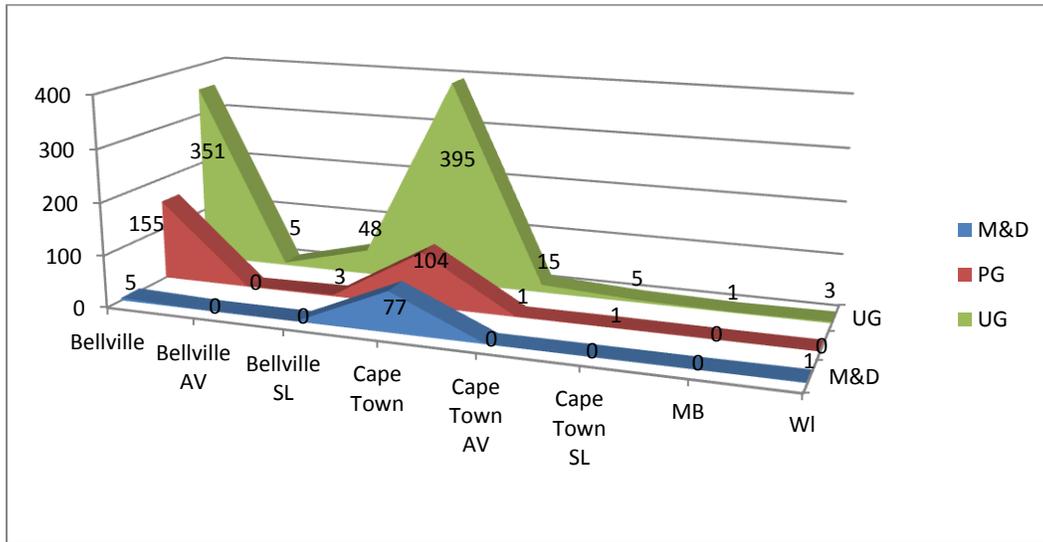
Where possible, a breakdown of the number of students registered for the course versus those using the library and the circulation of books by student type is included.

Table 2



Example of the Number of loans per user type and branch 2010 – Civil engineering

Table 3



Example of the number of items circulated per user type within the department

Other areas covered in the report include a breakdown of the budget for the department and course, the number of items purchased in the previous year, inter-library loans and usage of the electronic collection. Detailed library training statistics for the department are included.

Although the statistics are provided by the Quality Assurance Librarian, actual comment and insight with regard to the statistics is provided by the relevant branch or faculty librarian.

The final version of the report was taken to the University Quality Assurance Department for input and comment and was present by library staff to the Deans at a Committee Meeting and was accepted by the Meeting as the official template for submission of data by the library for faculty reviews.

The key purpose of the report (other than providing statistics) is as a marketing tool emphasizing the value the library is providing in supporting the teaching and learning function of the academic department.

Engineering Caucus

In order to illustrate to academics the importance of their collaboration with faculty librarians to maintain an up to date and relevant collection, an Engineering Caucus was held in 2011 by Engineering Faculty Librarians, targeting the Heads of Departments and lecturers of the Engineering Faculty. The purpose of the caucus was to create awareness of how the budget for the print and electronic collection was being spent, as well as to promote an increase in academic support and collaboration with book orders and database trials. It showed usage trends from the last few years and the current situation. A direct link between the behaviour of faculty to the loss of subscriptions to databases and online journals was demonstrated.

The Library Marketing Unit supported the Caucus in setting up information packages for delegates and notices for the Caucus.

4. Statistics and marketing for students

CPUT Libraries is aware that it needs to promote the library and its services amongst students. One factor for consideration is the analysis of actual user needs and wants and being cognizant of the reality

of the level of support the library is able to provide in relation to the demand of popular and sometimes 'unreal' expectations of the users.

Delgado-Gomez (2002) suggests that if today's young adults can find a quicker more comfortable way of finding information they will use it. Do they then need a physical library which by nature requires information literacy skills, which may not currently exist? Is the library able to provide them with access to information with the speed required by using the current method? The 'quickly and by phone' trend supports the possibility of a virtual library, or at least access to library online resources via cell phones.

Students today are largely part of Generation Y otherwise known as the Net generation. They are digitally native and largely prefer to learn from peers rather than from authority figures. It is generally accepted that they respond better to buzz marketing and want to be directly involved, i.e. stimulated, engaged and empowered during the marketing process.

Marketing which maintains a conversation and presence with the audience, combining promotions, publicity, advertising and public relations is needed. The outcome is to gain an active, interested and listening audience, in other words, participation. In order to address this generation and maintain interest, the Library needs to embrace social media and ensure that its electronic face is attractive and relevant. Another method used is to listen to the library users. The library employs the use of suggestion boxes to receive answers to surveys and to provide users with a platform which allows us to 'hear' how the student population feels about the library services.

One of the more 'visible' barriers faced by CPUT Libraries is language. South Africa has 11 official languages all of which are present to some degree at the University. English, the official teaching medium of the University, is often the third or fourth language of most of CPUT students. According to the 2001 census only 8.2% of South Africans have English as a home language while most African language speakers have only a rudimentary knowledge of English, speaking what is termed as "Basic English".

Kachru (1986:31) mentions that since English's second language speakers outnumber its mother tongue speakers in South Africa, the effect on the English language, its use, interpretation and understanding, phonetics, etc. has resulted in several new varieties of English or, Black South African English (BSAE) which refers to a language with its own "identity and ownership.

In the Western Cape three official languages are recognized:

- Afrikaans (55.3%)
- IsiXhosa (23.7%)
- English (19.3%).

At CPUT 35.7% of the students are IsiXhosa speakers followed by English (32.8%) and Afrikaans (19.6%). This immediately impacts on the approach, tone and language of the marketing campaign.

The general approach to marketing for students at CPUT libraries therefore encompasses a variety of strategies including:

- Using graphical representations instead of text
- Reducing the amount of text
- Ensuring wording is simple and to the point
- Promoting literacy and computer literacy
- Investigating the use of social media

The Library Marketing Unit has rolled out a pilot study concept in a handbill format, using mostly graphics with minimal text, to facilitate online searching training. Illustrations are used to indicate what to consider when initiating a search, (e.g. what kind of information is required; where to find the E-Resources and how to get started)

CPUT Libraries recently investigated the use of characters in a graphic novel layout to explain and alert students to services and resources provided by the library. The consideration for this investigation was that graphics might overcome the language barrier and use of jargon not easily understood by students.

4.1 Academic Support Programme (Leesnet)

Given the reality and seen within the culture at CPUT where many students do not complete their studies, academic literacy programs have been initiated. One such programme is Leesnet, a programme developed specifically for Afrikaans speaking Education students to develop reading comprehension and improve reading speed. This support programme is driven by four lecturers with support from the library staff. The library provides reading materials, access to the software on computers in the library, information support as well as the facilities necessary for running the programme.

The inception of the programme was spurred on by a recent study regarding academic literacy at tertiary level by Susan van Schalkwyk (2008) from the University of Stellenbosch. The low reading speed and high drop-out rate of CPUT first year students underlines the need for this programme in Afrikaans and if successful, for other language groups. During a test phase some students improved their reading speed, comprehension and vocabulary by between 30% and 120%.

The Library Marketing Unit, in collaboration with the library staff at the Wellington campus, will be setting up a mini conference/colloquium, in September 2012 to promote and create awareness about the programme. The aim is to have a panel discussion with experts in the fields of literacy and education from the universities of the Western Cape, representatives from the Western Cape Education Department, local council members and principals of surrounding schools. The results will be used to facilitate the expansion and collaboration between the various education sectors and be applied to identified areas in education.

Library @ a glance pamphlet

In 2010, some key statistics which demonstrated the use of the library and its resources were identified, compiled into a pamphlet called "Library @ a glance" and distributed in print format from circulation points as well as displayed in the libraries on the plasma screens.

The idea was to bring to the attention of all people entering the library the value that the library was providing to its clientele. Included in the pamphlet was the contribution library personnel make to research and key University activities normally associated with academic staff. By displaying this information it is hoped that the role of library staff as more than administrators could be noticed and acknowledged by faculty.

Table 4

CPUT LIBRARIES @ A GLANCE 2011

GENERAL SERVICE

10 Libraries
96 Staff
1 882 050 Visits
526 Service hours per week
2073 Seats
382 Computers for students
246 342 Visits to BV & CT
Learning/Knowledge Commons
77 465 Queries answered
22 310 reservations for seminar rooms and study cubicles

PRINT COLLECTION

281 210 Books
18 081 Print journal volumes
471 Print journal subscriptions
19 361 Active library users
187 106 Loan transactions
120 283 Items used in the library
13 484 Short loan transactions
7 277 Books added to the collection
8 012 Journal issues added to the collection

ONLINE COLLECTION

46 Database package subscriptions
1 New database
13 E-book package subscriptions
834 227 Database searches
283 368 E-journal article downloads
8 765 E-book searches
55 694 E-book section downloads
1 715 Items on digital library - Digital Knowledge (DK)
188 520 Full-text downloads from DK

RESEARCH

654 Theses online
160 429 Theses full-text downloads
1 136 ILL items supplied
1 465 ILL items received
1 809 Queries answered
4 718 Visits to the RISC facilities
7 Papers delivered at conferences
1 Article published

TEACHING AND LEARNING

436 Group training sessions reaching
9577 Students
3 676 Individual training sessions
Library represented on Plagerism Policy Committee and Graduate Attributes Task Team

Example of the Library @ a glance pamphlet

4.3 Surveys

Over the past few years the library has done two large user surveys, one a LibQual survey and the other an internal user satisfaction survey. The LibQual survey, completed in 2008, was the first large user survey done by the library and was well promoted (with support from the University Executive Committee) and available online or in print form. It was available in 2 languages, namely English and Afrikaans.

In 2011 the user satisfaction survey was completed with minimal marketing, relying mainly on branch librarians and their staff promoting the survey. Although again available both online and in print format, it was only made available in English.

Results of both surveys were marketed using various tools such as the CPUT newsletter which is distributed to staff and students, plasma screen presentations in the libraries and feedback on the CPUT website. Prizes offered in the 2008 survey were distributed by senior library staff and the various branches.

4.4 E-resources fair

Due to the perceived low usage of databases purchased by the library, an awareness and promotion campaign for e-resources was identified. A decision was taken that an e-resources fair would be held at the Bellville campus as a pilot project and should the fair be successful, that similar events would take place at the other campuses.

The target audience was students. The approach was to change the environment in which the resources typically 'lived' and hope for a change in perception, and therefore a behavioural change, towards library services and e-resources. As a result it became a co-ordinated, collaborative effort between CPUT Libraries and several university departments:

- ITS Department and Library IT department – setting up of internet access and connection, computers, leads, power points, etc.
- E-Resources librarian and external vendors - for participation as well as sponsorship of prizes
- CPUT Marketing and Communications Department and Library Marketing Unit – online & print marketing
- Faculty librarians - guidance and establishing relationships with students
- Maintenance Department – stalls , plants, layout
- Campus control – access control

The library invaded a space habitually populated by students, the auditorium, outside the sports hall. This immediately changed the atmosphere and generated the interest the library was hoping to create. A lot of interest was shown before the start of the event adding to the buildup of the event and assisted by the normal poster, email, web advertising platforms used. A diverse variety of prizes were on offer including a laptop, cell phone, memory sticks, school bags and umbrellas.

Librarians were available to guide students and assist them with their queries while vendors were able to present their products directly to the students with favorable results. Students were also asked to participate in surveys conducted during the fair to determine the success of the fair, their level of participation and general feedback.

Feedback received indicated the following:

- Venue: The chosen venue facilitated group presentations and was conducive to a collaborative learning experience.
- Pre-Marketing: The marketing campaign was successful and was aided by the lure of prizes.
- Impact: There was a good representation across all faculties.
- Student involvement: Some of the questions related to search strategies and online access, registration, availability, type of information and content management.

“On the whole, the type of interest generated was positive in as much as many students said they would tell fellow students” - Books24x7

Suggestions on how to capitalize on the success of the event was fed to the relevant Senior Librarian with specific emphasis on using the student testimonials to communicate the advantages of using online resources to the rest of the student population. There is ongoing and regular communication via the library site with regard to specific information that relates to the lectures being run, quick tips, user workshops, etc.

In the end, this type of marketing strategy proved to be the catalyst we look for in improving, in this instance, usage of e-resources

4.5 Student quotes used

Where possible and appropriate student quotes are used to emphasize attitudes, perceptions or general feedback. Quotes are used in survey reports, annual reports and in direct marketing campaigns.

Conclusion

The Library Quality Assurance Department and Library Marketing Unit are working closely together in order to identify areas to be marketed and develop campaigns for alerting library clients to available services and projects. Many of these decisions are based on the outcomes of surveys or captured

statistics. Future plans conceived from positive feedback are: focused market segment analysis, which includes identifying current segment penetration percentages for evaluation, focus group sessions for online trials and using analysis tools to gain a realistic view of an accepted percentage of penetration within our overall university population.

The focus of the Departments is to encourage clients to make better use of the library and its facilities and to create a positive image of the library as well as ensure that CPUT Libraries is aware of the needs of its clients and is able to adjust its services to cater for these needs.

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