Promoting library interaction with local community (Poster)

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Eva Tolonen and Irma Pasanen-Tuomainen, "Promoting library interaction with local community (Poster)." Proceedings of the IATUL Conferences. Paper 34.
http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/iatul/2004/papers/34
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Description:
The poster describes how library interaction with the user community in context can help in identifying emerging user needs.

Abstract:
User needs have always been the driving force of the Helsinki University of Technology (HUT) Library. The library serves a community of over 14,000 students and some 2000 researchers. Furthermore, the societal role of the library incorporates information services provided for the external clientele. The needs of the latter two user groups have over the years been assessed with ad-hoc questionnaires and interviews. The perceptions of students using the library facilities have, however, been more systematically assessed annually. The changes in the teaching and learning of the university create new challenges for the library in terms of resource material selection, format and accessibility. The decisions made are often strategic by nature because of the technological choices and license conditions involved. The community needs to be reached in the planning phase of new teaching and learning solutions because it is the context where the real requirements towards library services take shape. The user satisfaction analysis can give little, if any, advice in these matters at that point. In order to ensure the sustainability of library user-oriented services the Helsinki University of Technology Library has been active in its interaction with the local community in charge of the future teaching and learning. Especially useful has been the method initiated under the national virtual university concept where the library staff is trained together with, and as part of the teaching staff. The poster will present the HUT library activities in the area of interacting with the academic staff in developing the teaching and learning processes. The poster will review the multiple benefits from the librarian’s - and therefore the library’s - point of view. These benefits include for instance direct feedback and interaction with the academics, lasting relationships between librarians and non-librarians and librarian’s possibilities to gain personal insight into modern university teaching and learning as a whole. User opinions in the form of casual discussions with professors and teachers may also help the librarians to imagine the future library. Examples of successful co-operation will also be given. Interaction with the local community needs to be systematic and it needs to be continuous. The approach described in the poster presentation will not only enhance the library’s possibilities to act proactively but also makes the library a true partner in the 21st century engineering education.