Return on investment: new strategies for marketing digital resources to academic faculty

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Return on Investment: New Strategies for Marketing Digital Resources to Academic Faculty and Students from three Perspectives: Publisher, Collection Development and Research Services

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ABSTRACT

Game-changing strategies for marketing digital resources to end-users are crucial for establishing return on investment in this period of reduced library collection budgets and challenging resource prices. When expensive digital resources are purchased by academic libraries, there needs to be a marketing plan in place for getting these resources into the hands of end-users as quickly as possible.

One strategy for success is a marketing collaboration between the publisher and the academic library. This panel program will focus on the success achieved at the University of Central Florida Libraries where such a collaboration included experts from Taylor & Francis working closely with the UCF Head of Acquisitions & Collection Development and the Head of Research Services. Together they sponsored a digital resources educational workshop that included presentations by faculty, librarians and Taylor & Francis representatives and reached out to end-users as well as librarians from several Florida institutions.

This panel program will encourage Q &A participation by the audience. Attendees will learn innovative strategies for marketing digital resources such as: hosting vendor presentations and trainings in library classrooms or at academic faculty workshops; hosting webinars and presentations (for both academic faculty and librarians) that focus on exciting new products or major enhancements to existing library resources;

collaboration with campus partners (such as the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning) to market resources via weekly email blasts in the partner’s newsletters and announcements;
utilizing the mastheads of the library home page and scholarly communication web page to market digital resources.

**Taylor & Francis perspective:**

Taylor & Francis rolled-out a new initiative in 2014 to host collaborative library-publisher-academic workshops in key areas across the Americas with the intent of fostering relationships and goodwill in the library and academic community. Recent primary research conducted by Taylor & Francis to the library community cites that 77% of librarians agree that interactive workshops are the number one activity publishers can do to raise awareness of their content.

Taylor & Francis and the University of Central Florida will discuss how their February 2014 workshop raised the profile of both Taylor & Francis and the University of Central Florida across the state and the key differentiators that set this workshop apart from the rest. Since this event, UCF has become a partner with one of the largest commercial publishers in the world. The success of this workshop emphasizes the importance of human-to-human communication and the impact it can have with publisher-library relations and marketing outreach to end-users.

**UCF Head of Acquisitions & Collection Development perspective:** Until the past year or so the role of Acquisitions and Collection Development mostly was one of selection and procurement. While Reference librarians were always involved with getting the word out about new resources and training end users, the new UCF Libraries Subject Librarian model has greatly expanded expectations for end-user outreach at the University of Central Florida. The Head of Acquisitions & Collection Development has established a high priority for marketing new and existing products and has focused heavily on arranging training for subject librarians. Building on existing relationships with publishers and vendors has proven advantageous for UCF and several publishers have been eager to provide training and marketing assistance. Also, the Head of CD recently hired an assistant with a background and interest in marketing and her assistance and collaboration on these projects has resulted in increased outreach to end-users via:

- Refinement of the CD website
- Collaboration with the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning at UCF resulting in weekly email blasts to all UCF faculty
- Regular marketing of digital resources on the mastheads of the library home page and Scholarly Communication web page, as well as through digital signage in the library
- Hosting webinars and presentations (for both academic faculty and librarians) that focus on exciting new products or major enhancements to existing library resources
- Hosting vendor presentations and trainings in library classrooms or at academic faculty workshops
UCF Head of Research & Information Services perspective:

Using Subject Librarians to market digital resources to end-users.

The University of Central Florida Libraries has 15 Subject Librarians (http://library.ucf.edu/SubjectLibrarians/) who are encouraged to engage in proactive outreach to their assigned academic programs, faculty and students. UCF Libraries believes that the Subject Librarians are excellent conduits for connecting end-users with library resources (such as e-books, streaming videos, databases, electronic journals and scholarly digital collections) to ensure a robust return on investment for these costly resources.

The Subject Librarians market UCF Libraries’ resources (both new and under-used) via e-newsletters, customized web-based research guides, library instruction sessions, and presentations at academic department and university-wide meetings and workshops. For example, when Taylor & Francis presented an educational workshop on digital resources that was attended by both academic librarians and faculty at the main UCF Orlando campus in Spring 2014, the UCF Subject Librarians presented a panel program which focused on innovative outreach strategies for marketing library resources to UCF constituencies.

Subject Librarian e-newsletters used as tools to market digital resources

One way that UCF Subject Librarians reach out to their assigned academic departments and faculty is through their regular librarian-authored e-newsletters that are sent out at the beginning of each semester.

What messages are the Subject Librarians sending to their academic departments and faculty? Often the Subject Librarians are updating faculty regarding major library purchases of new digital resources. For example, below are articles which UCF Subject Librarians used in their Fall 2014 Newsletters:

**Streaming Videos:**
“We currently have three streaming video services available. Here’s an overview: Alexander Street Press: Includes thousands of titles in 12 subject collections. FMG Films on Demand: Mostly films for the Humanities and Sciences. We have more than 130 titles available. Digital Campus from Swank: A collection of over 19,000 theatrical films and television programs available to embed in Webcourses.”

**Springer eBooks:**
“Springer is a major publisher of academic and professional books and series. Their eBooks are suitable for research, study, and course projects, and can be assigned as textbooks. The UCF Library has perpetual rights and online access to Springer books published in English between 2005 and 2014, comprising over 16,000 volumes. In addition, UCF users have access to all of Springer’s major book series (from 1997 to 2014) including the well-known Lecture Notes Series”.
“Springer eBooks are available to all UCF students, faculty and staff anywhere, anytime. Because Springer eBooks are in PDF format, students can print, e-mail, and download entire chapters and books to read off-line on a cell phone, eBook reader (such as Kindle), laptop, or any computer.”

**Lib Guides used as tools to market digital resources**

Other marketing tools that UCF Subject Librarians use are web-based LibGuides. Frequently the Subject Librarians create LibGuides that serve as step-by-step instructions for using particular databases or digital collections. They publicize the urls for these guides on bookmarks, instruction handouts, newsletters, or in web-based course syllabi.

One of UCF Libraries’ most heavily used Lib Guides is entitled: “Textbooks, Textbook Alternatives & Course Readings from Library Resources” ([http://guides.ucf.edu/textbooks](http://guides.ucf.edu/textbooks)). This particular Lib Guide was created by Subject Librarian Rich Gause to encourage academic faculty to utilize library owned e-book content for their assigned class readings as an alternative to expensive print textbooks. The introduction of this Lib Guide states:

“UCF Libraries offers thousands of full text online books that can be used in the classroom or by individual students to supplement class readings. Please contact your subject librarians for help incorporating the books into your syllabi with authentication for off-campus access.”

This Lib Guide goes on to list each of the online book databases to which UCF Libraries subscribes, with a listing of each subject area covered by the database and the number of titles included for each subject area. For example….. “the Sage e-Books digital collection offers a total of 16 disciplines, with 604 e-books in the Business and Management section, 999 e-books in the Sociology section” and so on. Lib Guides such as this are very helpful to faculty who are interested in using digital collections for their class readings.

**Subject Librarians’ new mobility encourages marketing efforts**

At UCF Libraries there is a new emphasis on Subject Librarians becoming more mobile. Subject Librarians are getting out of the library building and spending quality time visiting their assigned academic departments and individual faculty members. They also are meeting with student clubs and associations throughout campus. The Subject Librarians use these opportunities to introduce their faculty and students to new and under-used digital resources and to demonstrate how these resources can be used to assist with their teaching and research.
Subject Librarian Training

The Research & Information Services and Acquisitions & Collection Services Departments are working together to provide training for the Subject Librarians to support them in their digital resource marketing role. The Research and Information Services Department coordinates annual all-day reference retreats, monthly reference meetings, and an online “Subject Librarian Toolkit” Lib Guide http://guides.ucf.edu/subject-librarian-toolkit to support the Subject Librarians in marketing digital resources.

The Acquisitions & Collection Services Department works closely with UCF Libraries’ many vendors to coordinate frequent publisher training workshops for librarians and academic faculty that focus on new or under-utilized resources. These training workshops usually take place in library classrooms which makes it very convenient for the Subject Librarians to participate. Subject Librarians also are encouraged to learn as much as possible about Scholarly Communication issues and initiatives and proactively reach out to their academic departments and faculty to help interpret Scholarly Communication issues such as “Open Access” and “Author’s Rights”.

Measuring the success of Subject Librarian marketing of digital resources

Success is measured by evaluating the overall impact of the Subject Librarian model on resource utilization. Does the Subject Librarian marketing role promote the desired return on investment for expensive library digital collections? Do librarians feel more engaged with academic faculty? Are Subject Librarians given time to speak at university and academic department meetings and to distribute information about the libraries’ new resources and services?

The important interaction between dedicated Subject Librarians and appointed academic department representatives remains at the heart of this new resource marketing initiative. The development of positive, trusted relationships with academic departments, faculty, and students is the foundation for all marketing initiatives.

Looking ahead to the future, the success of this new Subject Librarian digital resource marketing model will be measured by:

- an increase in Subject Librarian outreach to academic departments, faculty and students
- an increase in academic faculty participation in collection development
- an increase in faculty-student-librarian use of the libraries’ digital resources (as shown by the number of hits and downloads each resource receives)
- more informed collection development that will lead to even stronger collections and more effective use of UCF Libraries’ limited materials budget
Implementation of Subject Librarian digital resource marketing has provided UCF Libraries with an opportunity to succeed in new ways and to develop stronger ties with UCF academic programs, departments, faculty and students. It also has led to increased collaboration amongst the Subject Librarians, Acquisitions & Collection Services, Research & Information Services and the publishers who provide UCF’s digital resources.

REFERENCES
