Challenges and Trends in Providing Access Services in an Evolving Campus and Online Environments

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Introduction

Good Morning, I just wanted to say thank you for coming to this presentation on a holiday, well, a Massachusetts's Holiday, so Happy Patriot's Day. One of my first experiences when I arrived in Boston was planning for staff coverage on Patriot's day. Not being familiar with this holiday, I told the staff that Massachusetts must be a very football state to have a holiday for their team. That is when my staff informed me that it was not that kind of patriot.
I think that points to how we are always on a journey of learning, so I hope today that I can offer something new or at least offer an interesting perspective.
Since this is a vast subject with a lot of viewpoints, I decided to approach it from these three areas. I will say that much of what I discuss can fit into any or even all of these areas.
Starting with challenges. I wanted to talk about Uniqueness, Service and Assessment
“Access services is a sum of many disparate parts, and its encompassed operations impact every user of the academic library.”

(Krasulski and Dawes, 2013, p. ix)

“Access services is a sum of many disparate parts, and its encompassed operations impact every user of the academic library.” I think that all of us in the library may very important contributions to our community of users, but access services often has a very direct impact on patrons even if it is only for a minute or two. I think that one of the ways we meet this challenges is through uniqueness. As I have worked with other access services librarians and staffs, meeting at conferences and
meetings, I have thought how many of these departments are somewhat unique when comparing them. These two authors also talked about how many access services departments tailor themselves to meet the needs of their diverse and unique institutions. This leads into the challenge of service and services.
Access services is now more than just taking patrons to help find where a book is located. The challenge is to be continually looking at your services and how they are meeting the needs of your unique “evolving” community. Service levels and quality of service are important which are often contingent on your very important training programs for staff and students. All of these areas need to be continually assessed leading to the another challenge.
Assessment is both a challenge and a tool to for tailoring your services to your community. Luckily, there are many tools that are leading to our ability to assess our services. UM participates in LIBQUAL which I have found very useful in looking at access services. I do find that there is significant value to looking at the comments vs the overall score. This data gives you an opportunity see not only issues but possible solutions. I am a fan of doing some additional research such as user stories or observational studies to understand the community and its needs.
My suggestions for these challenges are to accept that your access services might be a little different because your community is different. Keep assessing your services so that you keep up with the evolution of your campus while using the right tools to do

- Be unique
- Evolve services
- Use the tools
this.
Now I want to share a few trends that I think will have some impact on access services.
Cooperative Collection Development is not a new trend, but there are some new developments coming. The aging of our library systems and the growth of online programs.
Cooperative collection development including storage and borrowing consortia, whether UM is part of them, have a direct impact on our lending and borrowing from other institutions. Sometimes that impact can be challenge. One new development is EAST. Based on WEST, Western Regional Storage Trust, EAST is in its early stages but is expected to involve a significant number of libraries in the northeast. It is in its early stages but it does look like initial funding from the Mellon Foundation is going to happen and it is an important trend to watch. This could also impact what we may be allowed to do with our borrowed materials such as offering a service to send materials to remote students in online programs.
As many of you know, our Library systems are reaching their end of life and new solutions are now becoming part of our world. As UM is looking at this process and joining this trend, I just want to share a little bit of my experience. Brandeis recently went from the ALEPH system to the ALMA system. We have been up on ALMA for a full year. This trend impacted every aspect of our operations, required changes to processes, and lots of training. This trend offered by library challenges, but also opportunities. One of the challenges is that this new system was designed to be more streamlined. It offered a single courtesy email for all collections, all patrons and was either on or off. This is being enhanced as the system matures, but makes it a challenge with the diversity in collections and diversity in patrons. Opportunities exist as I was able to accomplish our conversion of our science library to a storage facility with a easy retrieval system.
As you know, UM offers some online masters programs, a Bachelors of general studies and a variety of certificate programs in addition to the Online Middle and High School. Here are some interesting statistics. From a survey, students in online program think that they are just as good or better than classroom. Almost half of graduate students in these programs live a over a 100 miles from their campus. This trend means that these programs are sure to grow. Providing service to these patrons is going to be a challenge. Providing home delivery of materials, targeted purchases of electronic materials are some options. I think the key here is to pursue ways that push information about services out to this group, but this has to be a collaborative effort with others within the library. Online programs often have very different offerings which means that outreach to them can cross many subject areas.
I want to share a personal example. I was in a recent class that had two required texts and both were available in ebook library collections. We even had multi-user licenses. The majority of the class and the instructor were not local to Brandeis. So when the instructor provided the list of weekly readings, she would include a link to each of these texts. First, the links went directly to the e-book collections we couldn’t open them because the platforms didn’t have a method of identifying our accounts. Then the instructor send us Google book links with had its own challenges. Finally, I was able to send the instructor permalinks so that students could sign in through our discovery tool and give access. The challenge is how to reach out to this type of instructor and provide support for them and their classes.
I think that these trends have significant impact on access services operations. Cooperative collections will affect our operations and we have to decide how we benefit from them versus being challenged by them. A new library system is a shared experience, but focus should be on where the new system will improve operations. Lastly finding ways to get our services to these online communities will take coordinated effort. I do believe that the key to all of these trends is collaboration. Access services can’t make the impact on the community unless we work collaboratively within the library. Back in 2008, one of the ACRL standards Library Services for online students was Direct Human Access, particularly with electronic resources. So if an online student may call late at night and we help them access that e-book. But there should always be a standard to communicate this to those who can help support the instructor and help the entire class.

- Understand impacts
- Look for opportunities
- Market services
Finally, I just want to offer a quick look at some of the things that I have seen or been involved in that could turn into future challenges or trends.
• Collaboration Plus

• Patron Driven Acquisitions

• Student Success

Finally, I just want to offer what I think are some of the future opportunities that could turn into future challenges or trends. One of the things that we started as Brandeis was a group that representatives for all of the departments met once a month and collected information on all of the various projects we were working on. We discovered that many projects had a great deal of impact on other departments and that even departmental projects could potentially challenge resources of joint projects. The key here is that it is becoming increasingly important to look at ways for access services to collaborate.

Patron Driven Acquisitions has been around for a while. At University of South Florida, we implemented a limited but very successful Interlibrary Loan program and more recently, the Boston Library Consortium implemented a shared Ebook Patron Driven acquisitions program. There was some interesting responses from the publishers on this one, but it is still moving forward.

Lastly student success has been an important trend in higher education. ACRL listed Student success as a top trend in 2014. So I wanted to share an example of one of these projects where the library could be an active part of in the future.
As part of a business analysis class, we looked at E2Coach and reverse engineered this project. What I saw was opportunities where the library could collaborate on projects like this.
At the University of Michigan, a system called E2Coach was implemented. It was based on applications that helped motivate people to lose weight or quit smoking. E2Coach was designed to provide individualized motivation and support such as upcoming assignments for students in Physics classes to help them achieve better than expected results. When the system is reminding students about assignments, there could be links to discovery tools and other catalogs help the student find related materials. Links to the Course Management System and course reserves could be added. Links to various service and contact us pages so the student has a place to start. I think there could be endless opportunities for the library to support these types of student success programs.
“There is no single definition of an access services department. Each library has organized and will continue to organize itself and evolve to meet local needs.”

(Krasulski and Dawes, 2013, p. xi)

“There is no single definition of an access services department. Each library has organized and will continue to organize itself and evolve to meet local needs.” I think that the very nature of what we do in access services enables us to evolve with our campus and to develop ways to support online programs.
Thank You

Questions?
References


References


