USER EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY IN DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

Libraries of all types are providing an increasing number of resources that users can access from remote sites. Academic libraries, in particular, are becoming partners in their parent institutions’ distance learning programs. As a result, library staff now works with remote users (both students and faculty) with their own unique characteristics, needs, and expectations. To promote user satisfaction, library staff needs to better understand users and their needs as well as enable users to meet those needs. The changes in the Library and Information Service sector due to various factors have made innovation a necessity for its survival. This paper defines the new concept of Joint use libraries in the Academic and Public Libraries sectors. It gives details of the necessity of such innovation to ensure quality library services to all citizens to usher in knowledge based society. This article provides a particular focus on remote users in an academic environment.

Keywords: Library user based library services, user expectations library services, technology based library services, user knowledge from libraries.
INTRODUCTION

As libraries approach the beginning of a new century, they are encountering numerous developments that present both challenges and opportunities. While the list of developments is a lengthy one, key developments include: a user-centered orientation, a team-based work environment, steady or diminishing resources, and more pervasive technology. Related to a focus on users is the need to identify more clearly, and better understand, groupings of library constituents. This becomes particularly essential in light of the ever-increasing integration of technology. It is no longer sufficient to be concerned solely with the issues of access versus ownership, how to pay for an increasing number of electronic information resources, the equipment needs to provide access to technology, or the physical facility in which to do so. Rather, library staff should focus on who is using electronic information resources, how they do so, and what are their needs and expectations.

USER’S EXPECTATIONS

Expectations of library users have been changing rapidly due to the fast changing in Information and Communication Technologies. The collection of libraries has been shifting from print to digital format; resources are available in e-format and online; establishing linkages, consortia and network with other libraries; developing web resources for worldwide utilization of information resources. Information should be available and communicated up to the user’s expectations like- Free, filtered, focused, anytime, anywhere and in any desired format.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

When registering for distance learning courses, the students we surveyed did not expect them to be different from other classes they had taken on campus, and they did not change that expectation by the end of the courses. All students expected moderate to extensive use of library services, and those expectations were met. On-campus students surveyed in the same interactive video class had the same expectations.
as the remote students. Thus, it seems that the nature and level of a program or course, and previous experience within a program of study, will set student expectations about the need to use the library for assignments, even before the instructor has the opportunity to reinforce or adjust those expectations with his or her own expectations about assignments.

Students also expected online database access and extended library hours. These expectations were met, but not always by the home institution library alone. Students who needed extensive access to medical journals met those expectations by going to an academic medical library. The nursing department's policy statement suggests two such libraries with extensive medical journal collections and suggests querying individual libraries for policies and hours of operation. The communication of this statement to students through faculty, syllabi, handouts, or verbal orientation might have led the student expecting extensive access to medical journals directly to an academic medical library.

EXPECTATIONS REGARDING LIBRARY SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Most of the distance learners surveyed said that they needed library services and expected to complete the same assignments as they would on campus. However, distance learners might need different delivery mechanisms or emphasize different services. The availability of other providers of library resources and services colors students' expectations about library services. Moreover, people in the medical, legal, and corporate worlds are accustomed to having libraries perform more services for them.

Accordingly, when asked what library services they expected, two of the distance learners indicated that they expected a service offered by special libraries—i.e., literature searches performed by library staff. One changed her expectations, doing the searches herself, while the other went to a nonaffiliated library and had the search done there. While libraries serving distance learners could consider meeting such expectations, it is important to consult with faculty first to ascertain that such services will not hamper academic goals. For example, students who must develop a thesis should not be led to think of the literature review as separate from the process of ending fruitful areas for research.

CUSTOMER NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Needs should generally be more objective than either wants or demands. As a result, these needs are likely to be at least partially based on reason or logic. These are elements that are instrumental; if people do not have their needs met, they may fail to achieve a goal.

Expectations are the standards against which a vendor's or service provider's performance should be judged. How does one define expectations? Expectations are assumptions about the likelihood of something occurring. Alternatively, they reflect anticipated performance.

Customers tend to hold expectations that can be considered quite basic. Of greatest importance to customers is a basic solid performance and that promises are kept. Customers desire a quality service or product provided in a
friendly and courteous manner. Customer service expectations fall into two categories: (1) service as an end result or outcome that involves reliability or the ability to perform a promised service both dependably and accurately; and (2) service process, which consists of the following dimensions assurance (the ability of staff to convey a high degree of trust and confidence based on knowledge and courtesy), responsiveness (a demonstrated willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), empathy (providing caring, individualized attention to customers), and tangibles (the appearance of physical facilities, the amount of equipment and staff, and the degree of communication that exists between the service provider and its customers).

Library staff with a good understanding of needs and expectations and their relation to customer satisfaction will experience greater success in satisfying their customers. However, the goal should not be simply to meet expectations but rather to exceed them by surprising and delighting customers. To do so, library staff must attempt to both manage and redefine customer behavior and expectations. For some, this has the negative connotation of creating needs for a service or product developed more for the sake of the vendor or service provider than for the customer. What is actually involved is a market-driven focus manifested in creativity or innovation that develops a new product or service to address previously unmet or unrecognized needs. For this undertaking to succeed, library staff must possess a superior understanding of customers linked with the library's capabilities. We must understand our customers' behavioral needs, their overall attitudes, and the environment in which they use services and products, and their perceptions of how services and resources compare to those of other service providers.

Thus, library customers actually assume the role of partial employees of the library. Since customer dissatisfaction is often due to the customer's behavior, customers need to understand their role in the service delivery process. Library staff can assist customers in attaining this goal by employing the socialization process. By providing customers with behavioral guidelines that apply to a library, staff enable users to adapt to and come to appreciate the library's values, norms, and required behavior patterns. Many libraries have developed statements of guiding principles, beliefs, or values, and these can greatly facilitate the socialization process.

AN INCLUSIVE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Historically, Indian society is a hierarchical society and its knowledge base has always been elitist. Whether it is the caste based system or the colonial education system, access to knowledge has primarily been the privilege of the few. But such a system can never lay the foundation for a holistic development strategy. Therefore, all socio-economic and political ideas have to be focused on inclusive growth and socio-economic equality in the real sense. Society includes people with different experiences, values, and information. Much personal knowledge is hidden in the mind of individuals and out of reach of other people. There are tools and resources for sharing and exchanging knowledge and preventing duplication and repetition of the same mistakes. Knowledge and experience are valuable wealth for developing and
improving society. In such a society, the major activities of social, cultural, and economic organizations depend on knowledge.

Information and knowledge are not the same. An information society is not the same as a knowledge-based society. What is the difference? When librarians deal with information, they deal with subjects, formats, documents, and collections. In a knowledge society, they deal with people as well. Collaboration, critical thinking, initiative, intelligence, and personal and group learning are characteristics of a knowledge society. Knowledge workers become valuable resources. Libraries and librarians are essential in this knowledge atmosphere (Materska, 2005). In the age of knowledge librarians deal with people because knowledge is found in the minds of people. Therefore it is necessary to change a subjective and mental knowledge into an objective and practical one by establishing connections with people and learning and sharing knowledge.

A library is not a building stacked with books - it is a repository and source of information and ideas, a place for learning and enquiry, and for the generation of thought and the creation of new knowledge. Public libraries in particular have the potential to bridge the gap between the ‘information poor’ and the ‘information rich’ by ensuring that people from all sectors and settings of society and the economy across India have easy access to knowledge they seek.

The development of libraries and their accessibility to those in search of knowledge also implies the translation of books and information into all major languages in use in India and their appropriate conversion into user-friendly versions for the varied ages, interests, needs and knowledge levels of present and potential clients of library and information services. The Commission’s integrated approach to its mandate is already reflected in its initiation of working groups and consultative enquiry on language, translation, literacy, open education and information and knowledge networking - all of which can connect to the gateways that the opening up of libraries can yield. The Commission has already submitted recommendations on language and translation, to enrich and enhance the availability of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Documenting requirements is always a part of the system development process but use the documents as contracts only when there is a genuine contractual relationship between parties; even then, the contract should not be the only method for managing expectations. Educate users on the systems development process, the constraints under which the IT department operates, and especially on the impact of changes on the budget and schedule. A careful mix of these strategies will ensure users know exactly what to expect from their information systems. Librarians need to recognize their great potential in the digital era to become truly community centers where culture values can be exchanged and disseminated. They can do this by shedding their traditional image as keepers and custodians of information. This can be done if they begin to realize that they play a huge role as conduits of information, and have to be open to the possibilities offered by digital information and ICT.
REFERENCES