Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Valued Academic Library Services Are Not Necessarily the Ones That Are Used Most Frequently, Students' Service and Social Media Communication Priorities Should Also Be Considered

Stvilia, B., & Gibradze, L. (2017). Examining undergraduate students' priorities for academic library services and social media communication. The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 43(3), 257-262. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2017.02.013

Michelle DuBroy

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

DuBroy, M. (2018). Compte rendu de [Valued Academic Library Services Are Not Necessarily the Ones That Are Used Most Frequently, Students' Service and Social Media Communication Priorities Should Also Be Considered / Stvilia, B., & Gibradze, L. (2017). Examining undergraduate students' priorities for academic library services and social media communication. The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 43(3), 257-262. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2017.02.013]. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice, 13*(3), 94–96. https://doi.org/10.18438/eblip29463

Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Valued Academic Library Services Are Not Necessarily the Ones That Are Used Most Frequently, Students' Service and Social Media Communication Priorities Should Also Be Considered

A Review of:

Stvilia, B., & Gibradze, L. (2017). Examining undergraduate students' priorities for academic library services and social media communication. The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 43(3), 257-262. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2017.02.013

Reviewed by:
Michelle DuBroy
Sciences Librarian
Griffith University
Southport, Queensland, Australia
E-mail: m.dubroy@griffith.edu.au

Abstract

Objective – To examine how undergraduate students rate the importance of different categories of library services and library social media postings.

Design – Online survey.

Setting – Large research university in the United States.

Subjects – 159 undergraduate students enrolled in 3 information technology classes.

Methods – Participants were asked to rate the importance of different library service categories on a 7-point Likert scale. The library service categories were (1) access to information and computer resources, (2) study support services, (3) support for club meetings, and (4) Q&A services. Participants were also asked to rate the importance of nine different categories of library social media postings, also on a 7-point Likert scale. The categories of social media postings were (1) event, (2) resources, (3) community building, (4) operations updates, (5) study support, (6)

Q&A, (7) survey, (8) staff, and (9) club. Students were also asked to identify which library services they currently use.

Main Results – Validly submitted surveys totaled 104 (response rate 65%). Respondents rated *access to information and computer resources* (M=5.9) and *study support services* (M=5.9) as being of the highest importance, with no statistically significant difference being found between these ratings. Respondents rated *Q&A services* (mean not reported) and *support for club meetings* (M=4.8) as being of significantly lower importance than the baseline (*access information and computer resources*). In terms of service usage, using the library to study (87%) and to access information and computer resources (59%), were the top two most reportedly used services.

Respondents rated social media postings relating to *operations updates* (M=5.6), *study support* (M=5.5) and *events* (M=5.4) as being of highest importance, with no significant difference between the ratings of these three categories. Respondents rated all other categories of social media postings (*survey*, M=4.7; *staff*, M=4.4; means for remaining categories not reported) as being of significantly less importance than the baseline (*operations updates*). For just over half the social media posting categories (5/9, 56%) importance rankings found in this study agree with engagement rankings the authors found in a previous study (Stvilia & Gibradze, 2014).

Conclusion – The results of this study suggested frequency of use alone cannot be used to determine the value students place on a library's services, as students may perceive equal value in services they use at different frequencies. The authors, therefore, argued there is a strong need to inexpensively predict users' perceptions of service value without relying on usage metrics alone. Because a level of agreement was found between social media engagement (determined in the authors' 2014 study) and importance rankings (found in this study), the authors proposed further research be done to determine whether and how an analysis of library social media engagement can be used as an inexpensive way to predict

the perceived importance and value of a library's services. While the authors recognized it may not be appropriate to generalize the results of this study to a wider student population, they suggested the findings may be applicable to similar groups of students (i.e., undergraduate information technology students).

Commentary

As higher education institutions acquire a more corporatized culture, academic libraries increasingly need to demonstrate their value and contribution to strategic objectives (Oakleaf, 2010). *Value* can be defined as a customer's "overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 14). The perceived importance of a service plays a role in this assessment, with consumers being willing to give more and expecting to receive higher quality when procuring services which are important to them (Ostrom & Iacobucci, 1995). The authors of this study, therefore, sought to contribute evidence of academic library users' service priorities as a way to ultimately infer the value users perceive in these services.

The study was reviewed using two critical appraisal tools (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2004; Glynn, 2006) and a number of strengths and weaknesses were found. A copy of the survey instrument was not included in the publication, but it was reportedly pretested by a small group of students. Informed consent was obtained.

The authors used an ordered logistic regression analysis to determine the significance of any differences between average importance ratings, and this ensured their conclusions were not based on insignificant findings. The authors did not analyze how demographic factors may have affected respondents' priorities, nor did they discuss the potential presence of self-selection bias. Further, service categories were not mapped to social media post categories, so the connection between these is unclear.

While the authors discovered some high-level insights, the survey questions were not posed in a way that elicited precise responses. The service and social media posting categories were broad, uneven and included both academic and non-academically focused services. It is not known what subset of services *within* a category led respondents to rate that category as important or unimportant. Further, importance was a subjective measure that was not defined by the authors or placed in relation to a specific outcome. A student might have rated a service as being important, but it is unclear why that service is important to them, to what outcome they believe it contributes (e.g., academic achievement, sense of belonging), and what it would mean to the student if the service was no longer offered.

This study explored one approach for understanding the value clients place on a library's services. Valued services are not necessarily the ones that are used most frequently, so libraries need to ask their clients about their priorities, and then promote and deliver services that matter. More specific practice implications are limited, however, and greater benefit could be obtained through defining more nuanced service categories and by exploring students' service priorities in relation to specific outcomes or objectives.

References

Boynton, P. M., & Greenhalgh, T. (2004). Selecting, designing, and developing your questionnaire. *BMJ, 328*(7451), 1312-1315. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.328.7451.1312

Glynn, L. (2006). A critical appraisal tool for library and information research. *Library Hi Tech, 24*(3), 387-399. https://doi.org/10.1108/07378830610692154

Oakleaf, M. (2010). *The value of academic libraries: A comprehensive research review and report*. Retrieved from ACRL Value of Academic Libraries website: http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/issues/value/val_report.pdf

Ostrom, A., & Iacobucci, D. (1995). Consumer trade-offs and the evaluation of services. *Journal of Marketing, 59*(1), 17-28. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252011

Stvilia, B., & Gibradze, L. (2014). What do academic libraries tweet about, and what makes a library tweet useful? *Library & Information Science Research, 36*(3), 136-141. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2014.07.001

Zeithaml, V. (1988). Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: A means-end model and synthesis of evidence. *Journal of Marketing, 52*(3), 2-22. https://doi.org/10.2307/1251446