



Europeana Libraries workshop

Reaching out to researchers: Effective communication strategies for libraries

27 June 2012, 41st Annual LIBER Conference, Tartu, Estonia

SUMMARY REPORT

Thank you for your participation in the Europeana Libraries workshop in Tartu. We hope you gained some valuable new insights about ways to interact and support your researchers through effective communications. For your reference, here is a summary of the workshop, with some very helpful suggestions:

Zuzana Helinsky, Library Marketing Consultant, talked about the importance of marketing, while at the same time identifying the main problem: finding time to do so. A key to making products and services interesting is to find out what users are interested in, i.e. how they can benefit. Consider the return on investment, e.g. number of users, frequency of visits, etc. Don't take your "customers" for granted. Support them and help them. Encourage your users to comment favourably about the library; collect everything positive that has been said and re-use it.

Practically speaking, we must be more aggressive in our marketing via emails, training, newsletters, websites, Internet and attendance at related events. Final word about marketing: 'Do it, even if you are not sure that it's perfect. And above all, repeat, repeat, repeat.'

Antony Brewerton, Head of Academic Services at Warwick University discussed how the University engaged with researchers, using communications and marketing techniques. These were combined with physical spaces and virtual dimensions to have conversations with researchers and encourage "research exchange" across the Warwick research communities. His key suggestions were to 'connect and communicate' – have conversations with research communities, and be sure to have different messages for different audiences. It's a library's mission, after all, to connect users with information support. Have research exchanges, e.g. spaces for group work, poster competitions, etc. Arrange "peer events". 'Sometimes people want to hear from peers rather than experts.'

Mr. Brewerton also stressed how important branding is. Incorporate designs, colours, websites, blogs, social media, face-to-face activities such as lobbying and festivals, and peer-to-peer interactions, with students as ambassadors.

Professor David Nicholas, Director of CIBER Research Ltd, spoke about the key role that researchers play in the library environment, and what libraries need to do to move out of the library space and enter the researchers' space: Researchers tell you what they do; you need to understand and follow them, otherwise you will lose them. Pay attention to user behaviour and user needs. Researchers want to know what happens to their data and who is using their research. Research is highly competitive. Realize that social media affects all parts of researchers' work, regardless of age. Consider the implications of today's smartphones. And remember that personalisation is important.

Aubéry Escande, Communication and Editorial Manager, The European Library, introduced [The new European Library](#) as an important online discovery service for researchers.

Uldis Zarins, Head of Strategic Development at the National Library of Latvia, presented a use case on how The European Library was marketed in Latvia, particularly when there are weak ties with the research community (albeit strong ties with the library community) and a small budget. His recommendations, based on experience: Make others market for you by 'teaching the teachers', i.e. the research librarians. Run a series of local workshops targeting top researchers in each field/institution. Distribute promotional material. Establish an online presence, e.g banners on home pages, as well as links to The European Library, so that users become aware of the service. Organise workshops. Publish articles. Use social media to the fullest.

During the break-out sessions, the following questions were addressed:

- What is the communication gap between your institution and your audience?
- What do you want to try out or experiment with in order to fill in this gap in an ideal world (without financial constraints)?

Following are some of the sound bites from those conversations:

- Researchers more difficult to reach than students, because students are in the libraries
- Some researchers more aware of the possibilities than others, e.g. humanities less aware; age factor
- Place for exchange
- Ask them what they need
- Journals good for marketing
- Use resources you provide
- Branding very important
- Media lab
- Problem between libraries and publishers
- Open access problem
- Problem between library and government: funding
- Communication gap → one way gap
- Not getting feedback from users
- Why: lack of time, interest?
- Relationship between librarians and users not equal
- How to fill gap? Develop better network and relationship between libraries and users (researchers)
- Personal contact very important
- Friends of friends, peer-to-peer
- Blogs and workshops
- Helping researchers with their progress, e.g. how to write papers, etc.
- Collaboration with publishers, authors, researchers
- Key solution: flexibility from all different angles

The entire workshop is available to watch on the LIBER conference website:
<http://uttv.ee/naita?id=12532>

Thank you for personally making this workshop a huge success!