

Researchers and their library - parties apart or invisible colleagues?

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The Biomedical Library is a part of Gothenburg University Library. The library provides service to two faculties, the Sahlgrenska Academy with a staff of more than 1400 and to the Faculty of Science with a staff of 800. The staff at the Biomedical Library consists of 30 employees, mainly qualified librarians.

Background:

In 2007 the library was reorganized and the old departments were replaced with a team organization. Four teams are function oriented but in order to enhance communication with and information channels to researchers and students two new "horizontal" teams were formed. The members of the "Research team" represent the areas of acquisition, user education and customer service.

Objectives: In order to change working routines, enhance communication and to develop new services the "Research team" wanted to get a better view of the researchers information needs and a better knowledge of how they communicates with the library staff. Do the researchers think of our e-services as a contact with the library? What services are used and are the supplied services to their satisfaction? Do they demand user education? Are there areas where the library fails to supply high quality service? A study concerning these areas was performed in April 2008. A follow up with some in depth interviews has also taken place.

Methods: Literature studies concerning the relationship between researchers and academic libraries were performed. Were there any similar studies, what methods were used and could we find questions of relevance to the objectives of our study? The team decided to ask twenty closed questions, three of them with the option to add comments. The questions were based on three areas of special interest; acquisition, customer service and education. The questions were formed with the intent to simultaneously educate the user. Age, gender and institutional assignment were also of interest. A web questionnaire was used and an email letter containing a link to the questionnaire was posted to 2598 respondents in spring 2008. We later excluded 421 addresses from the original list as they represented other categories of staff than researchers.

Results: Of 896 respondents 87.4% stated that they never or very seldom visit the library. To order articles/books/journals, access problems and renewal of their Library card are the most common reasons for contact! Although most researchers are very pleased with the supply of journals, a number of people complained about the lack of literature, especially e-journals in their own field! We found huge disparities in the use of printed books. 75% of researchers in nursing and allied health use books as a resource but only 30% in the department of biomedicine. A large number requested user education in databases and reference programmes.

Conclusions: The large number of respondents has given us a lot of information on how researchers use their library. This spring a smaller number of in depth interviews have given us additional information. User statistics will be more used and we encourage researchers to be more involved in the acquisition process! Some responses also point at new areas for the library to look into!