Marketing tools to support university library's mission

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Abstract: This paper is focused on the use of marketing tools in academic libraries based on an example of the Central Library (CL) of the Czech Technical University in Prague (CTU). An initial important marketing tool is the segmentation of the CL users into specific target groups and specification of their individual needs and requirements. The CL serves its students and academic staff, supports the development of their information literacy skills and assists to form their key competencies for their lifelong education, future profession and career. Marketing tools can be well used to support the evaluation of R&D activities. Besides this CL also helps to promote and increase the prestige of the university and its academic community as a whole. The paper describes a broad range of marketing activities including electronic tools and services that help the library to meet its goals.

Introduction

The Czech Technical University in Prague (CTU)[1] is one of the oldest technical universities in Central Europe and according to the QS World University Rankings the best technical university in the Czech Republic[2]. The university has about 23 thousand Bachelor and Maters degree students and 3, 840 academic staff and PhD students (CTU, 2011). There are 8 faculties (Faculty of Civil Engineering, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Faculty of Nuclear Sciences and Physical Engineering, Faculty of Architecture, Faculty of Transportation Sciences, Faculty of Biomedical Engineering, Faculty of Information Technology), 3 higher education Institutes,

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[1] http://www.cvut.cz/en?set_language=en

[2] See http://www.topuniversities.com/ for QS World University Rankings

and 6 other constituent parts. All faculties and parts of the CTU closely cooperate to fulfil the university's vision of openness, internationalization of educational programs, and strengthening of its information strategy.

The university has an inspiring environment, where students, faculty members and researchers gain their motivation to work and produce research results. The university library is an integral part of this academic body. Its position is defined in the organizational structure of the CTU, and its mission is driven by the traditional concept of an academic library as well as by new trends in library services that are generally in correspondence with the long-term development strategy of the CTU[3]. The starting points are the cooperation within the university, cooperation with domestic and international university libraries, and creating of the potential to innovate the central library's services. The library's success and prestige is based on the ability of adapting itself to new conditions and needs. The mutual integrity of the library and the university is supported by the uniform university information system that simplifies the communication between the individual parts of the university.

The year 2009 was an important milestone for all faculty and institutional libraries. In this year, the Central Library (CL) of the CTU[4] was founded as an independent part of the university aimed to provide an information support of educational, research and creative processes at CTU. For the library staff it meant establishing a new team, starting new activities, new style of work, and updating all marketing tools with respect to online information sharing, library services sharing, and sharing of electronic tools and services for the information support of educational and R&D activities at CTU. For the users, this change brought new library site, new library staff and new services and rules.

Mission statement

Prerequisite for providing high-quality information support is that all services are based on the needs and requirements of the university and are in accordance with strategic goals of educational and R&D processes development. The strategic plans of the library are based on the long-term strategy of the university. The marketing vision of CL is that the library becomes an important and highly valued place, which keeps and strengthens its position within and outside the university by providing high quality information and tools for further work with the scientific information (communication, sharing of information and knowledge, management of research results).

To keep up with the market environment the library has to be aware the key characteristic of its surroundings. The library should realize all its possibilities (not only financial) and know what (products and services) and for whom are they essential. The library continuously conducts various inquiries, investigations, workshops, etc. Very helpful was a survey on citation behaviour,

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[3] http://www.cvut.cz/informace-pro-absolventy/dz only Czech version

[4] http://knihovna.cvut.cz/home/

citation ethics, or evaluation of our courses for PhD students which brought important information regarding the knowledge and information needs of our users, CTU students. Also analytical tools assessing the access to websites and to electronic information resources are a valuable source of information about the library users habits. Thanks to all these tools the library can evaluate which sections of the websites, which services and tools are the most visited.

User segmentation

From the marketing point of view it is essential to conduct an analysis of current services first. Before thinking of implementing new services, it is necessary to solve strategic problems regarding the Segmentation of users, Targeting and Positioning of these services (1999).

As an academic library of the CTU, CL has the advantage of knowing its users quite well. In terms of segmenting the services, it is essential to divide the users into the following groups:

- Bachelor and Master students
- PhD students
- Academic staff (faculty)
- Researchers

All library services are then targeted at a particular user group. For bachelor and master students the library provides library tours, information meetings for new (first year) students, recommendations how to write papers and theses, how to cite. Also, such topics as plagiarism, copyright law, and research ethics are covered. For PhD students there are further events as for example one-semester courses for PhD students, and many seminars and presentations covering advanced retrieval methods in databases. For better communication with the user group, an e-mail conference DSVinfo (mainly for PhD students) was established.

Services and tools provided for the faculty and researchers should support information provision for study and research at the CTU and presentation of the research results. One of the possible ways is to promote Open Access initiatives including building the institutional repository and defining OA policy within the university. The CL as a place for synergy of university and library fulfills the meaning of the Greek expression syn-ergazomai (co-operate).

Based on user feedback and analyses of the users' needs, the library tries to provide the best and most efficient services supporting creative educational and research university environment, and to bring such information environment, that the user is fully satisfied and does not seek services at competitors.

Marketing mix 4P

After evaluation of the initial conditions for introducing a new service or analyzing current service the next step is to apply 'Marketing mix 4P' - Product, Price, Place, Promotion (Kotler, P. et al., 2009).

Product

The policy of creating a portfolio of online services of CL results from an idea of interconnecting current CL services and adding value rather than independent tools. The new way of use of current services, updating and renovating of information technologies supports the data mining from databases, fast and open presentation of research results, and accessibility of publication outputs at the university. It is a dynamic system based on the requirements which enables innovations of current services and creating new value-added tools. From the marketing point of view, these value-added tools and services help to promote the library collections, services and electronic information resources.

Price

All services are provided to the user for free, i.e. are financed from the library budget. To survive in the competition, the library has to be well informed about the environment. For taking the important decision the CL strategic plan is fundamental. In the area of information support of research and education the plan is built upon the pillars of quality and relevance, upon synergy of resources and effectiveness of financing. It is in accordance with strategic plans of the university and results from the integrity of the university and from respecting common concerns in the university development, from the needs and requirements of the academic community – library users. By creating and setting tools and services for the support of sharing of electronic information resources for educational and research areas not only within the university, but also by setting a cooperation with other technical universities, it is possible to reach maximal effectiveness and efficiency in using available financial resources and in the accessibility of relevant information resources.

Place

The services of the CL are available for the users in the online environment. To use online resources there is no need to register in the library. It may however do require the user to use university user authorization.

Promotion

Regarding this product policy, we have been implementing such marketing tools, that the CL uses to promote its electronic information resources, implementation of modern information technologies, and building a space for online information sharing. Innovation of cooperating system of electronic

services and tools that the library has been focusing on is based on and influenced by feedback from the library users.

Product and strategy example

1. E-books

E-books are very popular types of documents that are available for the users for 24/7. CTU provides access to particular collections of Knovel library, ebrary as well as to individual e-book titles of the scientific publishers Elsevier, Wiley and Springer. In the past years the CL also provided access to Safari e-book collection.

E-books promotion

In the past, the CTU users had access to Safari e-book collection, where the number of available full text titles was limited to 30 at a time and was changing every month. Therefore a polling tool was created to vote for titles to be available for every next month. The value of the vote was depended on the user status (student/employee). Every user could vote for one particular title only once. This was a great communication tool which reflected the information needs and requirements of the users and gave the librarians a great feedback of the users' needs.

The idea of polling was re-used in newly created polling application for user-centered book acquisition tool.

2. Electronic information resources

The CTU has access to a number of prestigious electronic resources for science and technical disciplines such as IEEE/IET Electronic Library, ACM Digital Library, e-journal collections of scientific publishers Elsevier, Wiley, and Springer, or as citation databases Web of Science and Scopus.

Electronic resources promotion

'Serials Solutions' is a complex solution for the management and organization of all electronic resources available in the CL. It includes integrated tools and services for centered and unified information retrieval and document access from one place all at one time. Because of a large number of databases available at CTU there was a need to simplify the work with them and to provide more user-friendly environment. The metasearch engine '360Search'[5] is aimed at lowering barriers in finding relevant documents. The user is being informed about the number of relevant links, about the database in which the document is available and the availability of full text. Pre-test done in the beginning of the PhD courses showed, that the students are familiar with the tool and have been using it to search for information.

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[5] http://www.serialssolutions.com/en/services/360-search

Citation manager RefWorks[6] is being provided since 2007 and was originally purchased based on results of a survey regarding citing. It is a value-added tool for data mining from available electronic information resources and for reference management and organization. Its module RefShare is being used by the CL as a tool for communication with users, and to distribute and to promote news from the library collection.

'News in the CTU research field' is a new service providing the users with the information of newly published documents from particular research field in databases. It is based on web 2.0 tools (RSS feeds). The goal of this service is to offer a new channel for information sharing, for promoting new publications and for promoting information resources to a specific target group according to their specialization (Records are available only to users with CTU authorization).

3. Scholarly communication

The future development of university libraries will into a high extent rely upon the development of the university in the areas of R&D. Already today, the results in this area have both, direct and indirect impacts on the position of the CTU in terms of quantitative comparison with other universities (according to the world university rankings). Further impacts are also in the area of financing, i.e. with direct impact on the library, which is financed by the university. The library puts high emphasis on the information support of research and development at CTU in the area of information support of individual research areas, by tracking new core research areas and their coverage in available information resources. The CL also wants to participate in the process of improving young researchers' information literacy. The library wants to support the openness of the university by promoting Open Access (OA) policy. CL actively participates in the promotion of OA ideas, it tries to increase the knowledge about OA, prepares and promotes OA events, supports and encourages authors to be concerned about their author rights and to keep their author rights after publishing an article. CL also supports the OA to published R&D results.

Scholarly communication promotion

Institutional repository[7] is a unified university platform which aims to save, keep, share and communicate publication outputs published by CTU authors. It is being built within all principles of openness of the university towards the domestic and international environment, to increase the transparency of educational and research activities and to share knowledge and outputs of research activities both within and outside the university community.

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[6] http://www.refworks.com/

[7] https://dspace.cvut.cz/

COS Research Support Suite is a unique commercial tool to support the research and development activities at the university. It is composed of three sub-products: COS Scholar Universe[8], COS Funding Opportunities[9], Papers Invited[10]. It is not a typical social network, but rather a platform which eventually supports the establishment of social networks. This service provides verified information about the scientific community, their research projects, publications, up-to-date grant and funding opportunities, and also an up-to-date list of conference calls for papers. Researchers are provided with an individual space to present their work and to find new contacts and establish new research teams.

Using RSS feeds the CL constantly releases records about the publication outputs by CTU authors from the WoS a Scopus databases on its website (Records are available only to users with CTU authorization).

4. Information education

The library organizes a number of regular and irregular events regarding information education that shall contribute to improvement of students' and researchers' information literacy.

The CL website has become one of the main communication, marketing and promotion tools of the library. Thanks to the unlimited space for its presentation, the CL can widen its services targeted according to its users' needs. The CL can promote itself efficiently and guide the users through the website towards their desired and relevant information. This is usually the first place which the user visits before getting registered in the library.

Social network like Facebook[11] enables informal communication with users about new services, events like trainings or seminars. It also provides the possibility to connect itself with the other parts of the university.

Among further highly used communication channels are used various brochures, flyers, posters, as well as publishing of these information on the university and individual faculties' website.

Conclusions

Shall the library become a top institution in terms of the support of educational and research process at the university it must have the knowledge and ability to offer and promote tools and services and to support their use. CL respects these

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[8] http://www.scholaruniverse.com/

[9] http://fundingopps.cos.com/

[10] http://search.proquest.com/papersinvited

[11] http://www.facebook.com/knihovnacvut?v=wall

marketing principles: segmentation of user groups, targeting the services on the identified group, analysing user needs, and good timing of promotion. Thanks to following the above mentioned principles the library is able to provide new services, and to increase the use of current tools and resources. The CL shall also act as a guide in the time of their implementation and try to interconnect them with university environment (e.g. university information system).

With limited CL staff capacity, the online support of users is a starting point while implementing new services, above all the services which are focused on the increase of information literacy of students of all levels, and at the qualitative and quantitative increase of research output at the university.

The university library as a part of an academic community depends on the decisions of the university management that are in sometimes limiting. Therefore the library should observe new trends, gather documents and information for the university management, analyze users' needs, actively offer support and new solutions and thus continuously prove its unique role in the university environment.

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