

“Premises for lifelong learning”

Creating a business plan for literacy events in junior high schools

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Introduction

Due to the escalating complexity of rapid technological change, today's information society is confronted with an abundance of information sources and therefore has to face the defiance of tapping and understanding it.

Uncertain quality and expanding quantity of information pose large challenges for information search. If there is no understanding which information is needed and how it can be found, evaluated and used, the abundance of information will not in itself create a more informed but rather a more confused society.

In this context information literacy services become more important. More and more universities offer courses to communicate information literacy. Not only higher educational students need guidance in how to use information the correct way. This also holds true for the remaining society.

So while studying Information and Library Services, I created a three-phase curriculum. Its courses build upon each other to communicate information literacy to students of class eight, nine and ten (at the age of 13, 14 and 15) in cooperation with public libraries.

The events attend to abilities that cannot be attended to in the everyday school life because of time famine. Nevertheless, information literacy is really nowadays. This concept provides an opportunity for schools to communicate these abilities without a cost of time or teaching stuff.

To make this opportunity real the content of my bachelor thesis is to create a business plan for the proposed information literacy events. Courses should be offered independent from school and library institutions. The libraries only provide rooms and media. By implementing an e-mail survey I asked several schools and libraries if they are interested in this business idea. The outcome of this survey showed that libraries have a greater interest and have the opportunity to develop a budget for these events. So it is planned to offer the concept to libraries so that they can enlist schools with this new outsourced service.

Therefore I will identify potential target groups, markets and competition; present my occupational attitude and possible future prospects, as well as marketing strategies.

Concept for information literacy courses

Nowadays many public libraries offer services for reading-promotion, as well as information and media literacy. Therefore, the advantages for libraries lie in image gain and service extension; the advantages for schools lie both in discharge and additional training, while the advantages for students are alternation and increasing values of key qualifications.

However, these new forms of information literacy services also bring disadvantages for the library staff. On the one hand there is a high personal and temporal expenditure and on the other hand there is a difference to lead students as usual through a library then to teach a school class in full extent. This might create fears for the library staff, that their competences might be overstepped. Therefore many of the library employees are of the opinion that this kind of services does not fall in their area of responsibility.

A possibility to remove these problems, but nevertheless perceive the advantages, is the outsourcing of such services.

If somebody outside the institution is doing the courses for information literacy, the library is able to continue advertising these services and to improve its image as a teaching library.

Also the advantages for schools and students stay the same, while libraries have no temporal and personal problems. Nevertheless, the motivation of external employees might be a higher than those of the library staff.

To relieve the school staff as well as the library staff, a business idea was developed to offer services to communicate information literacy to students of the classes eight, nine and ten (at the age of 13, 14 and 15). The goals of these courses are to promote information literacy in the fields of "subject search and research in a library", "how to quote and verify in the right way", and "how to evaluate online sources".

At the first course in class eight the students learn how to find an individual subject for presentation and the information needed to prepare it. Therefore they have to search for relevant sources and information in the public library. Given sources were encyclopaedia, library stock and Google. They have to write a progress report stating their retrieval strategy, path of search, the findings and sources used. After this course the students are able to determine the nature and extent of the information needed and to access it effectively and efficiently.

During the second event in class nine they learn how to cite in the right way and how to create bibliographies. The issues of plagiarism and copyright are also to be discussed in this event. Therefore students have to write another progress report containing their results in the correct citation style. They also have to create their own bibliography of the sources they used. So in the end of this course the students are able to understand the legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and access to it.

In the third and last event in class ten they finally learn how to cite and judge online sources using certain criteria such as reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness and point of view. Based on the second event they learn to use information ethically and legally by demonstrating an understanding of what constitutes intellectual property, copyright and fair use of this material. Here they

have to write a progress report, as well. They have to describe differences and similarities between several retrieval systems such as Google and Wikipedia. They also have to evaluate the results focussing on content, viability, and structure. So finally they are able to evaluate information itself as well as information sources critically and use them in a legal way.

Every event is divided into two parts. While the data content is thought during the first part, the students have to present their research outcomes in the second part in groups of four or five. Therefore several students are given the same research question and have to present different aspects of this topic. The topics are chosen close to school instruction to achieve a good learning effect.

The trainer, doing the courses, is specially trained in the fields of library services and education. He forms the interface between the different institutions of schools and libraries, which does not exist yet. So these courses also provide a new synergetic effect.

Another innovative aspect is the mix of theory and practise in the school lessons, what therefore provides a higher motivation of the students by changing the new knowledge into practise.

Other advantages of the courses are the revitalisation of old teaching contents (e.g. quoting and bibliographies) and the training in dealing with library sources. Because though the students get to know the offers and possibilities in traditional library guidance, however, there is normally no time to teach them the direct handling of the available media. An important aim of the courses is to teach students in natural handling with digital and printed media.

Furthermore, they are trained in working with and in a library. So they recognize their own advantages and continue visiting the library. This is leading to stronger customer retention of the young generation to the library.

Observance of teaching library standards

Every one of the three different types tends to the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

Standard 1:

The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.

During the first event the students deal with a special subject and find out, in comparison with their own knowledge, what they would like to know about the subject. In addition they develop questions which they would like to have answered by themselves.

Standard 2:

The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.

During the first and third event the students get to know different searching entrances, searching ways and searching instruments, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of them. They learn how to form search words, how to use them effectively and how to create a search strategies. Every step is noticed in a progress report to document weaknesses of the searching strategy and to be able to change it if necessary.

Standard 3:

The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

While the first event gives only a short overview of quality standards for search entrances, the third event specially deals with the appraisal of sources. The students learn how do define quality of information sources and how to work out criteria for quality of information sources.

Standard 4:

The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

Content of the second part of each event type is the presentation of compiled results. Although every student receives his own individual job, groups can be build by summarizing the duties on upper subjects. Here it is of special importance to combine the own results and knowledge they had worked out self-contained, with the results of the other group members and then to create a logical common presentation. Finally this presentation is to be presented to the whole class.

Standard 5:

The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Content of the second event is plagiarism and copyright. The students get to know the meaning and connections of these words and learn how to deal respectfully with intellectual property of others. In this case they work out different quoting methods and learn how bibliographies are developed.

After the participation in all three events the students have attained all important basic abilities according to Claudia Lux and Wilfried Sühl-Strohmer. They can:

- Learn self-contained
- Cooperate with others
- Plan independently
- Track down and collect information
- Select and value relevant information
- Organize and record results
- Communicate and realise the final results
- As well as evaluate information and results

Target group

A concrete target group regulation is an important prerequisite's settlement for a product, because the real achievement can be better optimised, the more exactly the target group and their needs were grasped. Besides, not only one single group must be demanded; many companies try to appeal to different groups of buyers at the same time. These can be separated clearly from each other and be demanded on different ways. The more actually this succeeds, the more interest and inquiry is to be expected.

The target group consists of two parts. The first group are public libraries as direct buyers. They want to advertise by this form of the service with secondary schools to get in the long term new users. Hence, they can be looked as a mediator between the enterprise and the end customers.

Customer groups

The target group for the information literacy services consists of two parts. The first group are public libraries as direct buyers. They want to advertise secondary schools by this form of service to get new users in the long term. Hence, they can be looked as a mediator between the service provider and the end customers.

The second group exists of secondary school classes of the class steps from eight to ten. They are the indirect buyers or can be also named as end customers and use the services offered from the public libraries.

Volume of target group

As direct buyer a public library system of a city is aimed and the number of schools which can be reached from the library as indirect buyers.

Needs of the target group

The public libraries would like to advertise this new service to extend their offer and to improve its image for schools. Therefore, they expect the events to be done reliably and actually. Furthermore, they would like to keep the participants also in future as users of the library. Also a good price-performance ratio is of big importance for them, because the service is offered of free for the schools. For schools reliability, as well as a good planning and a lasting realisation are important. The events should achieve an added value that cannot be offered in normal school everyday life. Furthermore they expect the events to be done friendly and qualitatively well. Quick treatment of the results and a good reconciliation between trainer and teaching staff are important to confirm the achieved results of the students.

Competition

To analyse the competitive situation possible competitors with similar offers are described more detailed first and then are shown with her strengths and weaknesses in a competition table.

Events for reading promotion

These events are already very common in Germany. They can be offered commercially, honorary or library-internally, depending on library. The events address themselves to reading freshmen. They should learn how to read in a playful

way. Depending upon the form, the events are offered independently of schools. Therefore it may be a difference if there is a discharge of the teaching and library staff.

Library guidance

In Germany for many schools these library visits meanwhile had become obligatory dates. They are a not-commercial offer of libraries, in order to make pupils familiar with the environment and to win them as long-term customers. Library guidance are suitable for different age stages, depending upon kind of the processing. Usually the handlings of the library catalogue, as well as upper-laminar search knowledge are obtained.

Information authority at universities and colleges of further education

At the most universities and colleges of further education meantime events or offers are intended for the switching of information authority at the beginning of study. Although the target group is different, the same contents are treated, however on another level, verified to the target group. Often these meetings are held from the internal library staff, therefore there is no discharge of the library staff.

	Commercial offers	Same group of age of participants	Same/ similar offers	Discharge of teaching staff	Discharge of library staff
Events for reading promotion	(+)	-	-	+	(+)
Library guidance	-	+	-	+	-
Information authority at universities and colleges of further education	-	-	+	/	(-)
Business idea: Concept for information literacy courses	+	+	+	+	+

Table 1: competition table (source: own table)

Customers benefit and positioning

The founder of the courses disposes of rich practical experiences. Since all meeting types themselves were conceived and tested, they are subject to constant control and could be improved or adapted new conditions if necessary. A genuine increase in value is ordered by the high quality of the meetings and the fast reinforcement to the customer.

In order to give a short overview, in the following the advantages of this service are specified:

Advantages for public libraries:

- image improvement
- positioning as “teaching library”
- offer enlargement
- no charge for the library staff
- strengthening of cooperation between schools and library
- customer acquisition by connecting the students to the library

Advantages for schools:

- contact with media become trained
- key competences are imparted
- connection of theory and practise
- subjects of school lessons are deepened or refreshed
- use of a library becomes natural
- higher motivation of the students by change

As indicated in this overview, the introduced concept has advantages for public libraries as well as for schools.

Future perspectives

The distribution and marketing aims of the business idea could be made up in short-term, medium-term and long term aims.

Short-term aims (1-3 years)

In the first three years the business idea of the three event types for the switching of information authority is to be published and developed at schools and public libraries. In the first year the customers are to be convinced by the use and increase in value by high-quality work, so that they do not only visit the two subsequent events, but also the following classes do join the events.

Medium-term aims (4-6 years)

In this time further meetings about information and media authority but also about reading authority are to be developed and tested. Furthermore, both the new, and the existing courses all school forms are to be revised. One aim is a spiral curriculum, which addresses all grades and school forms. In addition also smaller libraries in the closer surrounding field are to be addressed, so that also schools outside the city can be arrived.

Long-term aims (> 4 years)

On a long-term basis the support of the school administrative board should be aimed, by the default of an obligatory visit of the courses for all schools. Moreover, library systems in other large cities should be addressed, in order to expand gradually.

Vision:

The key qualifications for lifelong learning are communicated to as many students as possible under discharge of the teaching and library staff.

Mission:

- all courses are particularly cut to the respective target group (class, school form) and ensure highest success in learning.
- all courses are tested in practical applications and are continual adapted and improved
- no matter, how large the group size in the individual events or the number of customers is, general questions and needs of each particular are discussed and taken seriously
- contents are not only obtained qualified, but also make fun
- learning successes are made visibly and motivate additionally

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