Reaching Out to Business Communities: Best Practices for Libraries

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Origin of Book Project

• Presented about Business Community Outreach
  – Reference Renaissance Conference: August 2010

• Approached by Managing Editor of Libraries Unlimited
  – Asked to submit proposal for a book

• Proposal accepted and book contract signed
Nature of Book Project

• Practical handbook for business community outreach
  – for academic and public librarians

• Incorporate experiences and practices of librarians
  – from a variety of libraries
Benefits of Business Outreach

• Promotes value of library in a community
• Increases awareness of library services in a community
• Provides opportunities for external fundraising
• Connects library to other community agencies
• Increases library awareness of community services
• Provides opportunities for programming activities
Challenges of Business Outreach

- Licensed database restrictions on commercial use
- Clients accustomed to having research done for them
- Working around timeframe of busy professionals
- Resource sufficiency for meeting research needs
- Requires staff with specialized skills and high availability
- Stakes of research extremely high
- Providing reference services without expert advice
Library Outreach Services

- Access to Databases
- Experts for Research Assistance
- Custom Designed Workshops
Going Out to the Business Community

• Visit meetings of local business groups

• Visit Rotary Club meetings

• Visit Chamber of Commerce meetings

• Visit Small Business Development classes
Bringing the Business Community in the Library

• Library Business Research Workshops
  – Entrepreneurship & business expansion
  – Opportunity for networking
  – Branding is key

• Expert Speakers from the Local Business Community
  – Library provides a forum for learning
  – Opportunity for libraries to learn about local business community
Common Information Needs

• New venture creation
  – Information for business plans & funding sources
  – Assistance with patenting a product or service

• Business expansion
  – New product/service or entry into new markets

• Grant funding

• Company newsletters/continuing education sources
  – Keeping up with current trends

• Career assistance

• Personal investment research
Best Practice
Scenario Based Outreach Presentations

• Herb wants to open a comic book and gaming store
  – Where? Reno vs. Las Vegas
  – How will he convince a bank that there are enough customers out there for him to pay off his loan?
Best Practice

Business Reference Strategy

- Identify patron’s primary need/purpose/objective
  - Start a business venture
  - Make an investment decision (Buy or Sell)
  - Develop a marketing plan

- Match need/purpose/objective with appropriate categorical list of resources
  - Bibliography of resources—readily available
  - Subject guide—readily available
Best Practices
Referrals

• Develop a list of community organizations that support business start up & expansion

• Include community organizations in resources guide for business community

• Refer to experts who can provide guidance with business plans, business financing or professional investment advice
Supporting Infrastructure

• Special access privileges-business user account
• Professional collaborative spaces
• Professional business research guides
• Guide of relevant free government resources
• Grant/foundation funding resources
• Career research resources
• Clearly articulated database licensing & other access restrictions (minimizing negative language)
Database Licensing Restrictions

• Commercial use restrictions
• Remote access to EBSCO's databases is permitted to patrons of subscribing institutions accessing from remote locations for personal, non-commercial use. However, remote access to EBSCO's databases from non-subscribing institutions is not allowed if the purpose of the use is for commercial gain through cost reduction or avoidance for a non-subscribing institution.
Following Up & Closing the Loop

• Tell the library story in interactions
  – Have information packets available at the ready

• Include business community patrons in mailing lists
  – To send updates, newsletters and other communiqués
  – To send fundraising materials

• Ask them to share their library experiences
Demonstrating the Value of Business Community Outreach Services

- Track interactions (anonymously) to provide an account of outreach activities to administrators

- Publicize initiatives (newsletters, newspapers)
  - Emphasize impact on business community
  - Include personal accounts of patrons

- Encourage patrons to share experiences with library stakeholders