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Business community outreach: Exploration of a new service role

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Business Community Outreach: Exploration of a New Service Role

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UNLV Libraries
A Reference Renaissance: Current & Future Trends
Denver, Colorado
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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
Common Concerns

• Deals with money (high stakes information)
• Demanding/impatient clientele
• Unfamiliar subject matter
• Uninteresting to many
• Too many vendors/products/formats
• Jargon rich
• Unsure where to begin
• Unique classification of information
Our Motivation for Business Outreach

• Key initiative of Libraries Advisory Board
  – Many members are prominent business leaders

• Key initiative for campus to diversify economy
  – Value proposition for funding higher education

• Economic downturn increases demand

• Growing trend for entrepreneurship & exporting
Developing Key Partnerships

- Environmental scan of community agencies that support economic development
  - Community organizations (Rotary Club)
  - Business & trade organizations (Chambers of Commerce)
  - Networking organizations: (CEO/CFO groups)
  - Entrepreneurship centers
  - Economic/business development agencies
  - State & city business agencies
  - Secretary of State
Business Outreach Activities

• Visited meetings of local CEO/CFO Group
• Visited Rotary Club meetings as guest speaker
• Visited Chamber of Commerce meetings
• Visited Small Business Development classes
• Visited Department of Commerce Exporting Seminar
• Visited workshops for business plan competitions
Business Outreach Activities
Nevada Small Business Development Center

• UNLV Libraries Small Business Information Gateway
  – Joint effort between the UNLV Libraries and the Las Vegas Nevada Small Business Development Center (NSBDC)
  http://www.library.unlv.edu/smallbusiness/smallbusiness.html

• NxLeveL for Entrepreneurs Course
  – 13 week course on Business Planning taught by a certified instructor
  – Visit class site for instruction sessions & provide reference support
  – Students have signed up to receive information from UNLV Libraries
  – Students have been included in contact list for UNLV Libraries’ Investors Circle
Business Outreach Activities
College Students

• Governor’s Cup Collegiate Business Plan Competition
  – Sponsored by Nevada’s Center for Entrepreneurship & Technology
  – Winning teams receive seed money for new business venture
  – Provide business plan workshops for UNLV student teams
  – Many teams have won first, second or third place in annual competitions

• Financial Literacy Workshops-College Bound Students
  – Clark County Summer Business Institute
  – UNLV Upward Bound Math & Science Programs
Business Outreach Activities
Department of Commerce ExporTech Program

- National collaboration with Manufacturing Extension Partnership, the U.S. Commercial Service and FedEx
- Goal to help local companies develop an export plan that they can implement immediately to increase their sales
- Each company engaged a UNLV College of Business intern
- Companies and interns were invited to a research session at the library where they became familiar with UNLV resources to assist in populating export plans
Best Practices
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?
Our Outreach Services

- Onsite Access to Databases
- Experts for Research Assistance
- Custom Designed Workshops

Available from UNLV Libraries
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
Common Information Requested

- Company directory information
- Detailed information on a company
- Industry information
- Product information
- Investment information
- Small business/entrepreneurship information
Best Practices

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
Checklist of Skills

• Company directory information
• Industry & market research reports
• Government data sources
• Investment information
• Funding sources from banks, venture capital
• Non profit funding sources: foundations, grants
• Career/vocational information
Skills Training Resources

• ALA Reference & User Services Association
  – Business 101 Course
    http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/development/businessreference101/
  
  **Registration Fees:** $100 for students/retirees, $130 for RUSA members
  $175 for ALA members, $210 for non-ALA members

• ALA Business Reference & Services Section
  – Core Competencies/Core Resources for Business Reference
    http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/sections/brass/brassprotools/corecompetencies/corecompetenciesbusiness.cfm

  – Best of the Best Business Websites (Free Resources)
    http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/sections/brass/brassprotools/bestofthebestbusiness.cfm
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 restriction examples
  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.

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Keeping Them In 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 with library stakeholders and peers
How to Demonstrate 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 and peers
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