

“E-Day” in Bern: promoting e-resources through an all-day event

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Abstract

For the first time a joint event between the library, the Medical Faculty and external partners was held at the medical library of Bern University. With a combination of promotional and social activities and information skills taster sessions the library tried to raise awareness of e-resources and increase their use.

Key words: promotion of e-resources; information skills; education; medical students.

Introduction

James G. Neal in a 2011 address to the ACRL conference (1) bashes the current trend of evaluating libraries based on a very narrow-minded return-on-investment (ROI) calculation, and demands the development of assessment methods that take a much wider view of services provided by libraries, and the multiple benefits these services generate for education and research. In doing so, he also outlines his understanding of a modern library service for an academic institution: “passionately focused on user expectations”, ready for “perpetual change and hybrid structures” and taking an “entrepreneurial approach to the packaging and delivery of information”.

What Neal says about academic libraries in general is of particular importance in regard of their services around e-resources for a number of reasons: e-resources are particularly expensive; libraries have already lost their monopoly, both of content and of search tools, and are now competing against free and chargeable alternatives; and, finally, the “Google generation” tends not to perceive librarians as people whom they could turn to for help with searching in an on-line environment (2).

A marketing strategy – i.e. the “circular process of assessment, advertisement, training (of staff),

instruction (for researchers), assessment, advertisement, and so on” (3) – aims to form a long-term relationship with library users, and helps libraries bring their services and users’ needs in tune in a methodically sound, efficient and effective manner (4). If you do not advertise your service you will miss the awareness of both existing and potential users of your resources, which is in particular true for electronic resources that are not physically visible (5).

Why an “e-Day”?

Libraries have a range of standardised management procedures to ensure resources are used for the maximum benefit of their user community. Nevertheless, in the medical library services at Bern University we were under the impression that our e-resources might require some additional measures. Information Literacy Training (ILT) is currently limited to a single lecture and practical in year 3; an extension of curricular and optional ILT is under planning, but depends on additional funding for a post. An e-book collection was only started in earnest in late 2012, and until 2013 usage even of core reading list titles was far below expectations. Therefore we were looking for a high-impact way of raising awareness of our e-resources that we could

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deliver with just the small team we have – but it had to be something bigger and bolder, and more fun, than the usual librarian’s address to freshers (Figure 1).

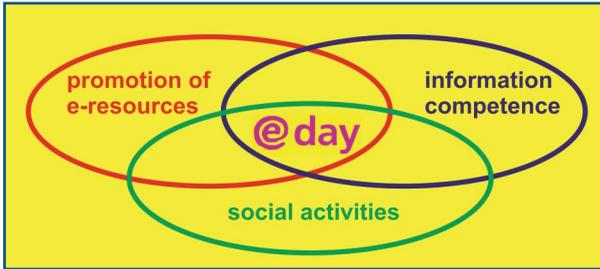


Figure 1. Our “e-Day” combined three components to promote the e-resources efficiently.

We were aware of the annual “e-Day” at the Berlin Staatsbibliothek (6), so we let ourselves be inspired by that concept and adapted it to our needs and circumstances. What particularly attracted us to the event format was that it was so different from everything we were doing already: we didn’t want another channel through which library information would trickle steadily; we hoped an “e-Day” would have a bigger impact if, for once, we offered a broad range of talks, workshops and presentations to choose from (Figure 2).

Programme flyer

Programm

@day in der Fachbereichsbibliothek Bühlpfatz, Bern
Dienstag, 15. September 2015

zeit	inhalt	ausprobieren	anschauen
9.15 – 9.45	Mit den richtigen Tools gut vorbereitet für das 1. und 2. Studienjahr (M. Schaffer, für MA und L+P)	My workspace on Ovid: practical, personal and pro-active knowledge management for doctors (M. Fanning für MA und L+P)	Produkte und Anbieter
9.45 – 10.15	General organization of research paper (M. Schaffer, für MA und L+P)	Einführung in Scopus (A. Zimmermann, Raum B 179, für MA und L+P)	Arbeits- Werkzeug
10.15 – 10.45	Mit den richtigen Tools gut vorbereitet für das 1. und 2. Studienjahr (M. Schaffer, für MA)	Einführung in Mendeley (A. Zimmermann, Raum B 179, für MA und L+P)	Broschüre Thelcion
10.45 – 11.15	Cochrane Library – An introduction (G. Stewart, für MA und L+P)	My workspace on Ovid: practical, personal and pro-active knowledge management for doctors (M. Fanning für MA und L+P)	Christlurt Institute für Medizinische Lehre
11.15 – 11.45	Cochrane Library – An introduction (G. Stewart, für MA und L+P)	Einführung in Scopus (A. Zimmermann, Raum B 179, für MA und L+P)	Cochrane Library Wiley
11.45 – 12.15	Cochrane Library – An introduction (G. Stewart, für MA und L+P)	Einführung in Mendeley (A. Zimmermann, Raum B 179, für MA und L+P)	Ebooks Elsevier
13.15 – 13.45	Erfahrungen mit E-Ressourcen im 1. Studienjahr (Fachschaft Medizin für MA)	Mit den richtigen Tools gut vorbereitet für das 3. und 4. Studienjahr (M. Schaffer, für MA)	Ebooks Springer
13.45 – 14.15	General organization of research paper (M. Schaffer, für MA und L+P)	My workspace on Ovid: practical, personal and pro-active knowledge management for doctors (M. Fanning für MA und L+P)	Ebooks Thoma
14.15 – 14.45	Erfahrungen im E-Ressourcen im 2. Studienjahr (Fachschaft Medizin für MA)	Einführung in Scopus (A. Zimmermann, Raum B 179, für MA und L+P)	Journal Thoma
14.45 – 15.15	Cochrane Library – An introduction (G. Stewart, für MA und L+P)	Einführung in Mendeley (A. Zimmermann, Raum B 179, für MA und L+P)	Medline Ovid
15.15 – 15.45	Mit den richtigen Tools gut vorbereitet für das 3. und 4. Studienjahr (M. Schaffer, für MA)	My workspace on Ovid: practical, personal and pro-active knowledge management for doctors (M. Fanning für MA und L+P)	Morphomed Institut für Medizinische Lehre
15.45 – 16.15	Cochrane Library – An introduction (G. Stewart, für MA und L+P)	Einführung in Scopus (A. Zimmermann, Raum B 179, für MA und L+P)	Radlour Institut für Medizinische Lehre
16.15 – 17.15	Globales Wissen und lokale Anwendung – Grundlage für alle Entscheidungen in der Gesundheitsversorgung (G. Antes für MA und L+P)	Einführung in Mendeley (A. Zimmermann, Raum B 179, für MA und L+P)	Scopus Elsevier
17.15 – 18.45	Apéro (für alle)		Scopus Apps Elsevier
19.00 – 20.00	Leisung von Paul Wittwer (für alle)		Studimed Diskant

Figure 2. Programme flyer.

Planning and preparing the “e-Day”

We started with a joint meeting with colleagues from the faculty and from the Institute for Medical Education who supported the idea from the start – and who later were the first to renew their commitment for next year’s repeat of the event. It

was crucial to have the support of the faculty; thus the day was incorporated in 1st year-students’ timetable (the event was scheduled on the second day of term, and was the only item on freshers’ timetable for the day). It was agreed the second most important target group would be students at the beginning of their Master thesis, i.e. years 3 and 4 (Figure 3). The focus on beginners and students starting off with their dissertation defined for us which resources and services to present: e-textbooks and apps for year 1, the major databases for years 3 and 4.



Figure 3. Library presentation on thesis writing.

With now over 300 students in a single year, the small library team would never have been able to present at least a meaningful selection of e-resources, so we had to get help from elsewhere. We decided to approach publishers and aggregators, and invite them to show off the products we were licensing from them (and only those) (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Students at a publisher’s stall.

The major e-book publishers and database companies all obliged; publishers generally sent their sales reps for the e-books to present their wares at stalls, while database providers had their educational staff run live demonstrations in tutorial rooms or hands-on workshops in a PC room. Alongside the commercial e-resources lecturers from the Institute of Medical Education showed off their own range of learning tools. With all the major e-content taken care off, library staff could focus on the library’s web interface, and the trainee subject librarian gave numerous talks on learning techniques and preparing a dissertation. The e-journals and the systems teams also had a presence, as did the IT support and the HE IT hardware purchasing scheme. Sadly, our efforts to recruit a number of student speakers failed – we would have welcomed it if some students from higher years had passed down advice to younger ones.

To raise the profile of the event and attract a wider audience, we decided to invite a high profile speaker, Prof. Gerd Antes, the director of the German Cochrane Centre, for a keynote speech (7) (*Figure 5*).

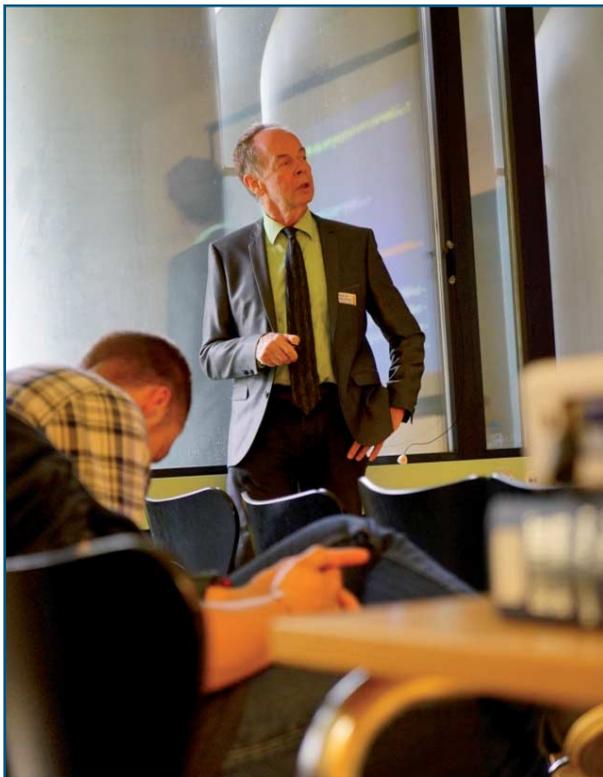


Figure 5. Prof. Antes at the keynote speech.

In Switzerland any event of this kind is accompanied by a (usually quite lavish) reception of drinks and finger food. As under the rules of the canton library budgets cannot be used for hospitality, the major publishers stepped in and jointly sponsored the reception. And, finally, we wanted to finish the day in a light-hearted way, so we invited Paul Wittwer, a Bern alumnus, local GP and best-selling author of crime novels set at and around the Bern University hospital, for a reading from his latest book (8).

The “e-Day” from dawn to dusk

After the librarian had got all the external partners on board, the operations manager began to shape the event, and adapt it to the resources available – space, time schedule, staff time. The detailed planning was then delegated to a team member who developed a range of standardised options for the external partners (various sizes of stalls, use of tutorial and PC rooms, need for power, projectors, etc.), and handled all further communication with the external partners.

The night before the event a handful of student assistants helped us shift furniture and turn the library into an exhibition space with an open-plan presentation area accommodating an audience of just over 100 (though we had also reserved a 250-seat lecture theatre nearby as a fall-back). The library team welcomed exhibitors in the early morning; setting up stalls was quick as the furniture had been brought into position already, together with roll-up banners and other materials that publishers had couriered to us in advance.

In the run-up to the event we distributed 3,000 leaflets across the medical faculty and the hospital, other relevant departments and libraries; and the librarian made an appearance at each of the orientations for years 1 to 4 to draw students’ attention to the day.

In the course of the day 580 visitors came to the library, with 1st years clearly being the largest group – no wonder, as their timetable had been kept free of other commitments. In a relaxed atmosphere students browsed at stalls; their clear favourites were e-books and IT hardware. Of the talks and workshops the ones on learning and research methodology were most popular, with up to 60 participants, while interest in databases was lower than expected.

Evaluation and plans for next year

Feedback from partners both within the University (Medical Faculty, Institute for Medical Education, IT) and from content providers was unanimously positive. The 26 visitors who filled in the evaluation form, were happy with the event overall, but also made useful suggestions for next time, e.g. incorporate reference management software.

The low attendance of database workshops was most likely the result of a timetabling conflict – the relevant years 3 and 4 had classes until 4.00 pm.

Overall, the event was successful measured against the targets we had set ourselves. However, there is scope for improvement: the relatively low participation of year 3 and 4 students will have to be addressed through an adjustment of their timetabling next year; we hope to also attract more lecturers and researchers; and more publishers have asked to be invited. The 2016 repeat will clearly be much easier and less time-consuming to prepare – the overall concept remains valid and only requires some modification in details. Contacts at the external partners, processes and templates will also be reused. And, last but not least – the library team benefitted considerably from preparing this event together over months, and enjoyed the opportunity to show off our best services in the company of our external partners and in a prestigious format. We would certainly recommend the concept for imitation!

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