Monday, July 15, 2013

E-books use by Pharmacy students: overcoming barriers
Library Resources, The University of Reading

The library acquired a large number of e-books over the last three years, including many core texts. Usage statistics show that these are not heavily used, and student dissatisfaction with library resources has remained high.

This project aims to investigate the barriers to e-books usage, and to discuss the ways in which these may be overcome.

Its overall aim is the formulation of a strategy for the promotion of e-books to Pharmacy students, and the development of an information literacy programme that will equip them with the skills they need to make effective use of electronic books.

Project Manager: Erika Delbecque
Project Consultant: Helen Hathaway
Project team: Student assistant
Stakeholders: Pharmacy students;Library acquisitions department;Liaison Librarians;The e-book strategy working group;Director of Teaching and Learning for Pharmacy;The library representative for Pharmacy

Scope:
An investigation into the barriers that prevent students from using e-books
The suggestion of solutions for each barrier that is discovered, informed by current research in the field
The formulation and implementation of a strategy for the promotion of e-books
The integration of skills that are necessary to access and use e-books effectively into the digital literacy programme
Revisions to the spending of library resources for Pharmacy in accordance with the findings of the project

Main tasks
Devising and carrying out a survey on e-book usage amongst Pharmacy students. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected. The usage of print books of which the library holds an electronic copy as well will serve as a bench mark.
Setting up focus groups and carrying out interviews for the collection of more in-depth qualitative data
Analysis and discussion of the results
Rebalancing of the spending of the library budget as necessary, depending on the findings
Development and delivery of a promotional strategy
Development of students' digital literacy skills in the use of e-books
Impact evaluation through the comparative analysis of usage statistics and qualitative feedback from students through focus groups

Deliverables
The integration of training on accessing and using e-books into the digital literacy programme for Pharmacy students
A targeted promotional strategy for e-books, which will include advice on the Library web pages

The increased usage of Pharmacy e-books
The revision of the library budgets for Pharmacy as necessary

Collection development that is more tailored towards student needs

A project report
The resulting article will be entered for the Sheila Corrall Publication Award, with an eye to publication in an academic or professional Library Studies journal

Rationale and Aims

More targeted spending of library budgets

Better use of library resources by Pharmacy students

Higher student satisfaction with library resources, which will contribute to overall student satisfaction as measured by the National Student Survey

The development of students' digital literacy, which is transferable and will benefit students throughout their academic and professional career

The findings of this project will inform the overarching e-book strategy that the Library is currently looking to develop

Digital literacies addressed

Students' ability to find, access and navigate e-books for academic study on a range of platforms. Students' awareness of the differences between e-books and their printed equivalents, and the advantages associated with each format.

This project aimed to assess students' current knowledge of and experience with e-books, in order to inform strategies to address the gaps that were identified.

Overview
The statistics for e-books usage from the platforms on which they are hosted were analysed. An online survey (created through Bristol Online Surveys) was conducted on the use of e-books by Pharmacy students and their views on e-books. 55/400 responded. The findings were discussed further in a focus group (1/6). On the basis of these findings a number of recommendations were formulated, which are in the process of being disseminated to other Liaison Librarians and to the teaching staff in
Pharmacy:

Digital resources and know-how used

The study focused on MyiLibrary, the platform on which most of our Pharmacy e-books are hosted. We identified that the following know-how is required in order to make effective use of this resource:

- knowing how to use the Library catalogue to search for e-books

- knowing how to access e-books both on-campus and off-campus

- knowing how to navigate the text by using the table of contents and the full-text search

- knowing how to download and print from e-books

One of the recommendations to come out of this project is to address these skills in information literacy sessions to all part 1 students. A page on accessing and using e-books (under 'info tips') will be added to the website.

Benefits and impacts
The aim of this project was to gather information that would enable us to develop students' skills in using e-books. However, the results from the survey also highlighted a few other areas in which the Library could better support students, such as supplying more copies of core texts, which were subsequently invested in.

We also discovered that there is a common misconception amongst students that electronic copies exist of all books, or that the Library can make any print book available as an e-book. This demonstrates that Library staff should focus not only on the practicalities of how to access and use an e-book, but also spend some attention on explaining the difference in publication practices.

Conclusions or lessons learned
- Half of the students who don-t use e-books don't use them because they don't know where or how to find them. User education in the use of e-books for academic study is clearly important.

- Most students who do use e-books user them as a back-up or for reasons of convenience, rather than because of the additional features that the electronic medium offers. The large majority of e-book users have not used the advanced features that e-book platforms offer, again indicating that our students would benefit from instruction devoted to the use of e-books.

- We can increase the use of e-books by providing direct links to them from the VLE, and indicating which titles are available as e-books on reading lists.

- We need to address misconceptions students have on e-books

The biggest challenge is to encourage students to take part in surveys or focus groups

Links and further information
Two blog posts:

https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/digitallyready/2013/02/11/pharmacy-students-and-e-books-an-update/

https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/digitallyready/2012/09/06/e-books-and-students-an-uneasy-relationship/

A Prezi:

http://prezi.com/ya6mqv_vbplo/e-books-and-pharmacy-students/

Further opportunities
See the recommendations under 'Conclusions or lessons learned'. The results of this project will be disseminated at the next Liaison Librarian Forum (early Summer) and at a Pharmacy staff lunch meeting (early October). It is hoped that this will lead to more instruction in the use of e-books on the part of librarians, and a better awareness of how they can support students in the effective use of reading list items and core texts on the part of academic staff.

Raise awareness amongst academic staff

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Links from Blackboard; RISIS; new student induction

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