

A comparative study of marketing management in British and German university libraries (PhD thesis)

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Context

Within the last decade, the environment in which university libraries operate has dramatically changed. The rise of Conservative Governments in both Britain and Germany and the resulting shifts in public policy as well as the declining economic situation have led to a drastic decrease in resources. Librarians have had to find ways to cope with fewer funds in an environment which is growing ever more competitive. A useful tool for increasing the effectiveness of a library is marketing management, which as been defined by Kotler as follows:

Marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and exchanging products of value with others.⁽¹⁾

Marketing management is a means to achieve effective financial management, to use existing resources more efficiently and to create new resources in a customer-centred and market-oriented way.

Aims of this research project

With the establishment of the Single European market, it is of yet greater importance and relevance for librarians to look beyond the borders of their own country. Britain and Germany are two countries which, on the surface, seem to be very similar - highly advanced technological societies with a similar culture. However, academic libraries in both countries have recently had to face distinctly different developments. These developments did, however, have similar effects: libraries receive stagnant or reduced funding whilst similar or improved service standards are expected. It is the aim of this research to establish how and to what extent marketing management is applied in German and British university libraries. However, since it is a comparative study, it is not sufficient merely to establish the state of the art. Foskett defines comparative librarianship as:

that brand of library and information science in which a number of systems - their structure, functions and techniques - are examined in order to place their characteristic features in a frame of reference applicable to all of them; to study the role which these features have played in the development of the system, and to assess its significance in relation both to the other features of the same system and to other systems; the aim being to evaluate causes and effects, and from this, where appropriate, to formulate hypotheses as to the best ways in which one, or more, of these systems may develop in future.⁽²⁾

Hence, the situation in university libraries of both countries will be compared in order to discover why certain aspects of marketing management developed in particular ways. Ultimately, this project seeks to indicate how British and German librarians could use each other's experiences of management practices, techniques and strategies. In order to achieve this objective, insights had to be gained into the practice of British and German university library management by conducting

a literature search. This was then used as a framework for, and the background to, fieldwork. Furthermore, an interview schedule was drafted, pretested and piloted, and a stratified random sample of British and German university libraries has been chosen for in-depth interviews.

The author would welcome enquiries on the nature of the research. Further information can be obtained from Antje Cockrill, Department of Library and Information Studies, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 3AS, Wales; e-mail: anr@uk.ac.aber.

References

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2. Foskett, D J (ed) Reader in comparative librarianship, Englewood, Colorado: 1979, p4.