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Web2.0 Services and the Management of Academic Libraries

About Mannheim University

Mannheim University is one of the most distinguished German and European universities in the fields of economic and social sciences; it has 11,000 students enrolled in five schools (Law and Economics, Mannheim Business School, Faculty of Social Sciences, School of the Humanities, School of Mathematics and Computer Science)

Mannheim University Library has 5 libraries with 2,200,000 volumes, 4,000 serial subscriptions (print) and 20,300 serial subscriptions (electronic).

New challenges for academic libraries

Academic Libraries have to deal with the fact that the growing information resource market will change their user's expectations regarding usability, discovery and delivery of information resources. At the same time Libraries have to improve their services while diminishing financial and staff resources. For that reason Libraries need to define the current and upcoming information needs of their customers and start a conversation with the users about their wishes, needs and points of critique. This specific knowledge can help libraries to bridge the gap between current library systems and today's user expectations and strengthen their customer's bond with the library. Thus they may reclaim their position as a preferred source for information retrieval.

Reviews in the OPAC

The first issue is to encourage the library's users to participate in an active dialogue and to evaluate the user-generated contents. The idea is to meet the user's expectations by adopting the features of popular internet bookshops like Amazon. This software enables the users to publicly review and rate the library's media in its online catalogue. Additional information is thereby provided to other users on whether a library item is suitable for their purposes. For the library this information offers the possibility to survey the acceptance of its books and to identify the subject areas most vividly discussed. A marked interest in a specific subject like marketing can then result in the systematic expansion of the library's holdings by acquiring related literature.

Example: http://aleph.bib.uni-mannheim.de/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=wrdr%3D121361403

Blog for library news and announcements

Mannheim University Library publishes news and announcements in a blog and encourages the customers to discuss developments with both the library staff and each other. For the library this information offers the possibility to survey the acceptance of its products and to identify the subject areas most vividly discussed. A prominent example is the evaluation of

additional services financed by special tuition fees at Mannheim University. A demonstrated public interest and a positive resonance may well result in additional funding for the library. Example: <http://www.bib.uni-mannheim.de:8080/blog/>

Tagging of library items

With the growing amount of documents available, manual indexing is not a feasible option. Thus Mannheim University Library seeks alternative methods of indexing documents. Statistical methods for automated document indexing are an attractive option. Another option is collaborative tagging, a process by which users add metadata in the form of keywords to shared documents. Mannheim University Library will compare the quality of automated document indexing with that of collaborative tagging and will publish a recommendation of the most effective way of indexing and how both methods could be combined. For our experiments, we work with a hierarchical common treeview and the treemap visualization. This allows interactive navigation through the thesaurus hierarchy without losing the orientation. The full interactive capabilities of the program are demonstrated in an online animated presentation at <http://www.kaiec.org>.

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