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CHANNELING DON DRAPER: DABBLING IN DATABASE MARKETING

By Katie Wesolek, Gaby LeBeau, and Robert Heaton

Introduction

Utah State University Libraries' Collection Development Department embarked on a marketing campaign to increase awareness of our databases. Every two weeks, we select a new subscription or an existing subscription that has been underused in the past. We write a short description of the resource and produce an accompanying visual that may illustrate an example of the resource's content or just display the database's logo or title. Our graphic designer posts this description and image on the library's homepage. She also composes a design combining our image, text, and a QR code linking to the resource, which she posts to a flat screen television monitor display in the library's entryway.

Discussion



Credo's usage during and immediately following the spotlight was much higher than it was during the same period of the previous year. Usage tapered off towards the end of the Fall semester, and seems to have resumed the same basic pattern of usage as last year during the Spring semester, but perhaps at a slightly higher level due to the increased awareness.



At first glance, this campaign appears to have failed. This year's usage was the lowest yet, but we attribute that to other factors. First, we implemented a discovery layer that pulls in results from our EBSCO databases, so there is generally more federated searching and less direct usage for our EBSCO products. Also, we upgraded our subscription from Business Source Premier to Business Source Complete in June 2012, so the increase in full-text content has probably allowed students to expend less effort searching for immediately accessible results. This year's usage follows the same pattern as previous years, so we think that perhaps there is already widespread awareness of the database, which limited the possible impact of our marketing efforts.



The time of year appears to have been a factor in the success of this campaign. This was a new subscription so historical usage patterns do not exist yet, but it appears that the end of the Fall semester caused usage to taper off just as we were promoting this database. Usage did pick up again and trend upwards starting in January, but we have no way of knowing if this was because awareness generated by our campaign carried over into the Spring semester, or if the uptick in usage should be attributed mainly to students and faculty already aware of CMMC who resumed their research activities.



This has historically been a very under-used database that was on the chopping block as a possible cancellation. This promotion was designed to give it one last chance. Usage increased tremendously during the spotlight period, but dropped back down immediately afterwards. We intend to continue monitoring usage for several more months to see if there is any sustained impact from the marketing.

Conclusion

These results are preliminary. We realize there are many factors that may affect the outcome of our marketing efforts, such as the time of year, class assignments, visual appeal of the marketing materials, and so on. We intend to turn this into a longitudinal study in order to measure the impact of our efforts over time. This will be especially important for the newly acquired resources we have highlighted, since a typical usage pattern has not yet been established.



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