

“Library 4 You Program”: shaping and revitalizing relationships between patron and library

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ABSTRACT

Although the academic library has its own specific patrons compared to public libraries, the challenges in encouraging users to visit the library still one of the issues especially the millennial generations nowadays. In conjunction with the issue, an initiative has been taken by UPM Library to conduct the “Library 4 You Program” for the purpose of bringing the library nearer to the users. The aim of this paper is to share the initiatives taken by an academic library in shaping good relationship between library and its patrons as a best practice. The data for this study were collected through documents, personal experiences and observations from the program implementation. The study also focused on the arrangements and activities done throughout the program. Pictures were included in this paper to show the actual activities and programs conducted. This initiative has been conducted yearly as one of the library programs in collaboration between library and faculty members. UPM Library had found that this program is a positive approach in promoting the library services and facilities to the patrons by bringing the library to them. The library promotions, strategic alliances and partnership among faculty members can help to revitalize the library and stay relevant. The Library 4 You Program could also close the gaps between librarian and user which exists in certain libraries across the region. Along with the experience sharing, the limitation of this paper it was done within the academic library setting. It may differ in approach according to the types of that specific library.

Keywords: Outreach program; marketing; library initiatives; library services; library usage; academic library; best practices.

INTRODUCTION

Revitalize (verb) according to Cambridge Dictionary (2018), to give new life, energy, activity, or success to something. Towards the new technology environment, it has given a new shape to educational life across the world (Jayaprakash & Venkatramana, 2006). People use internet to find valuable information, connect to people, sharing ideas and

others which also affect the physical libraries function. Although tremendous digital format sources available online, a large part of the information not yet digitize, so that makes libraries important and still relevant. However, to make sure current libraries are vulnerable to provide comprehensive services and facilities to users, it is a need to better understand the patrons' needs and desires. In revitalizing and shaping concept in library generally and academic library specifically, is to make something grow, develop, or become successful again which most fit by meaning of revitalize in this paper (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). In other words; freshen, recharge, recreate, refresh, refreshen, regenerate, rejuvenate, and renew the existing library itself (Merriam-Webster, 2018). This concept is very important to be included in strategy and planning of each library management to overcome the current and future issues in term of services and facilities. Therefore, from varies of aspects all libraries across the world have taken initiatives to revitalize their library which in the same time give added value on their image.

Sultan Abdul Samad Library (PSAS) also known as Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Library is one of academic library in Malaysia. In supporting the University's mission which is to make meaningful contributions towards wealth creation, nation building and universal human advancement through the exploration and dissemination of knowledge, UPM Library has organized several programs in terms of marketing the library services and creating connection with the faculty members. One of the programs organized is the Library 4 You Program.

As an academic library, issues regarding the users and visitors are not so challenging compared to public libraries. It is because students and university staffs are the patrons of an academic library. However, due to time evolvement and technology development, academic libraries also affected. Library users, especially students, no longer use libraries as their main reference centre. Students who are mostly youth nowadays also known as millennial generations, prefer to get information and reference materials through the Internet. They are more inclined to getting things fast and in an easy way. These have been proven by several previous studies related to information seeking behaviour among youths (Kerins et al., 2004; Liu and Ye Yang, 2004; Heinstrom, 2005; Earp, 2008; Catalano, 2013). Most of the facilities and services available are rarely used by patrons. There is a wastage in terms of budget spending and labour costs on unused facilities and services. Therefore, what is the role of academic libraries and librarians in addressing this issue? What steps or best practices can be taken in dealing with this issue?

In initiatives to revitalize the library and shaping the relationships between patron and library, librarians really play an important roles. Studies on user's need and want could help libraries to strengthen and reinforce the role of librarians and information professionals. There have been numerous studies that relate the success of a library with the role of a librarian (Wei et al., 2013; Abrizah, 2015; Omar et al., 2016; Baba, 2017; Baba and Abrizah, 2018). One of the initiatives that could be done in dealing with the issue discussed is by conducting outreach programs.

Outreach Program Approach

The Library 4 You Program organized by UPM Library being significant with the outreach program definitions. For the purpose of this paper, the following definition of outreach activities as the outreach program from Joly et al. (2012) was adopted: *“Outreach activities are often used to increase awareness, provide access to services, and recruit individuals to participate in community activities, research projects or health promotion interventions. Outreach programs have also been used by non-traditional sectors to encourage community engagement”*.

Connection between library and their patrons is really important nowadays. This is to make sure the services and facilities provided will still be relevant and fully utilized. Through this initiative, library roles and functions will be noticed by patrons in the same time the connection between them such as trust will increase (Varheim, 2014a). Social trust between patron and library could be created from the library programs as highlighted by Varheim (2014b) which could also generate the social capital value. Not only on the purpose of library services promotion, strategic alliances and partnership between library and faculties can also be as solution in providing good library services for any type of libraries. In agreement with the statement, Ahmed and Edwards-Johnson (2013) did mention that the faculty member or graduate student will be looking for subject expertise, referring to the librarian, as a trusted person when they have research related questions. Activities involved in the Library 4 You programs could create a collaboration and connection impact between library, faculties' member and patron.

By providing this kind of outreach programmes, patrons will be more appreciative when the information provider can be reached and easily accessed by them. The innovative relationship between libraries and users throughout the program, could encouraged patrons especially students in pursuing and sharing their knowledge with others. Librarians could play an important role in the outreach program conducted. Whereby through good conversations, which are not only academically inclined but also socially focused with the patrons can result in a sense of the 'human touch' being incorporated within the terms of face-to-face and social interaction. This effort could enhance their enthusiasm and cultivates loyalty among them. When the patrons feels that the library is special to them like being noticed and greeted by their name, the library will be as a third place for them. This is why it is important for the library to evolve.

METHODS

The data for this study were collected through documents, personal experiences and observations from the program implementations. Each year since 2015, Library 4 You program were conducted by Research and Information Management Services Division, PSAS and being recorded as yearly program. Apart from the raw data available on each year's division reports and program folders, various documents were consulted for preparing this paper including: PSAS Bulletin (MyLib), PSAS Research Information Hub, posters, emails; data were collected and recorded to make them meaningful. The study also focussed on the arrangements and activities provided throughout the programmes.

Pictures of the programmes were included in this paper to show the actual activities conducted.

LIBRARY 4 YOU PROGRAM

This present paper shared the experience by UPM Library in a collaboration program between the library and faculty members by introducing the Library 4 You Program. UPM Library had been conducted their 4th Library 4 You Program on 8th November 2018 at the Faculty of Computers Science and Information Technology (FCSIT), UPM. The program was officiated by Associate Professor Dr. Masrah Azrifah Azmi Murad, Deputy Dean of Research & Postgraduate Studies, FCSIT, UPM. Previously, the program had been held at the Faculty of Modern Language and Communication in 2015, Faculty of Biotechnology and Biomolecule Science in 2016 and Faculty of Economics and Management in 2017 in UPM. The program had been organized throughout the years by Research and Information Services Division, PSAS. This paper provides a brief explanation and details on specific tasks during the duration of the programme. Also shared are several images taken during the program for clear views and better understanding.

Planning

During the first department meeting, the Faculty of Computer Science & Information Technology (FCSIT) has been selected as 2018 Library 4 You Program venue. Automatically, the liaison librarian in charged for the faculty will be assigned as the Program Director, which is Puan Rusniah Sayuti. Following that, the Library 4 You Program committee members were appointed and formed between 16th March to 9th April of 2018, which involved 20 staff mostly from the Research and Information Services Division, and other related divisions. The approval for the program was made by the Dean of FCSIT on 27th of March 2018 through official letter and follow up calls. However, due to the late announcement of the Malaysian 14th General Election which had fallen on 9th May 2018, the program that had been suggested to be held on 8th May 2018 had to be postponed to 8th November 2018. The new date had been agreed upon between FCSIT and the library through second proposal.

Several committee meetings had been carried out and minute to make sure all the planning and ideas will be achieved. Involving the selections of IEEE Online Database, Emerald Student Ambassador and Publishing Workshop speakers as the main events of the programme. The only budgeting required for the program was the speaker's emolument of around RM300.00. The cost was provided by PSAS management as an appreciation to the speakers. While other costs for the activity such as gifts and souvenirs were being sponsored by individuals and PSAS staff. The venue preparation of the programme started a day before for the layout and placement of all equipments needed. Overall, the planning and the preparations (committee meetings, promotions, video montage, gifts & souvenirs, and venue setting-up) took about three months.

Promotion and activities

Programme promotion conducted through several mediums and activities such as through email circulations among faculty members, library websites announcement, library Facebooks and WhatsApp groups. Posters also being hung around the faculty and library. The promotion were carried out by Liaison Librarians and programme committee members.

The Library 4 You program activities were as follows:

- Opening Ceremony (remarks by the PSAS Chief Librarian)
- Library Seminar on Publication (Publication in High-Impact Journals)
- IEEE Xplore (Online Database Training)
- Emerald Insight (Online Database Training) (Figure 1)
- Library Exhibition (services & facilities @ PSAS, liaison librarian, research services @ PSAS, online databases & research tools, UPM Publications performance, do & don't, library on social media, library team) (Figure 2)
- Reference desk
- Book donations
- Games (Fear factor, win in 60 seconds, whisper, 10 seconds shelving skills, jigsaw puzzle, congkak) (Figure 3)
- Publisher booth (Springer Nature, Emerald Student Ambassadors)
- Sales booth (Book2UKarangkraf, preloved bundle, cakes & cookies, Malaysian Ice-cream)

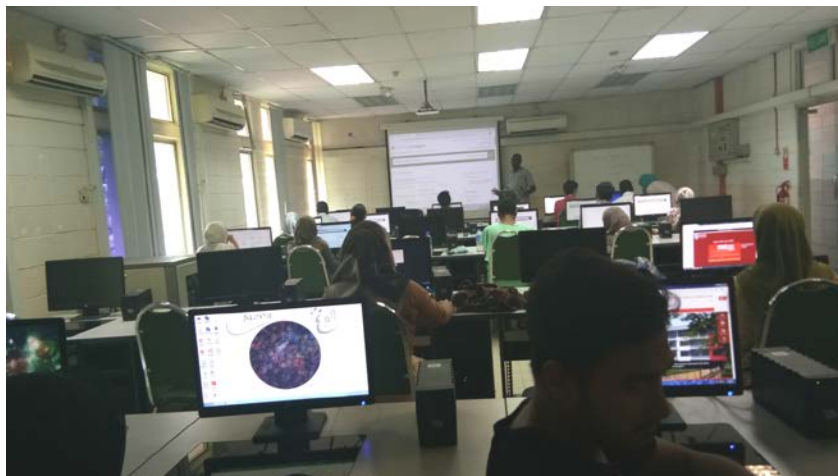


Figure 1: Emerald Insight (Online Database Training)



Figure 2: Library Exhibition



Figure 3: Indoor Games

Participations

The program had attracted interest and closer ties with the UPM community, especially from the FCSIT patrons. A total of 338 people participated in various activities within the programme. All participants (students/ lecturers/ staffs) really enjoyed joining all the activities provided (Figure 4). Generally the response given was encouraging and shows that the programme is still relevant to be continued in the future. This programme is in line with the implementation of the UPM Read@Uni campaign.



Figure 4: Overview of the Library For You Program@ FCSIT, UPM

DISCUSSION

Library involvement in this programme is able to provide a positive impact to the UPM community as well as the library itself. The collaboration between the library and the faculty in organizing the Library 4 You programmes will not only be contributing positively in building educational links and dissemination of knowledge but creating informal relationship between students and educators in the faculty with the librarians involved. This initiative done by PSAS not only revitalize the library roles and functions but also shaping and revitalizing the relationships between patron and library.

This kind of outreach program encourage students to be more interested in participating and organized activities as well as facilitating the librarians involved, in getting to know the students more closely and cordially. This informal relationship will be allow the students to be more comfortable in obtaining information especially involving their learning and research process. Educators however, can equally help the library to improve the quality of the library collection. Despite facing financial setbacks in maintaining library collections, educators and the library can work together to find better approaches and alternatives to ensure the library's collections and materials are supportive to the teaching and learning requirements of the faculty.

Furthermore, this programme can be used as a way to expose and disseminate library facilities and services especially on the role of the Faculty Liaison Librarians. The programme can be one of the ways to highlight the skills of the Faculty Liaison Librarian as a research, learning and reference information representative. Indirectly, students and educators can identify with their Faculty Liaison Librarian and know with whom they can acquire aid and assistance if there is a problem that arises in finding any information needed. Face to face interaction makes it easier for information to be obtained and understood, more open in discussions and information received, more reliable and valid.

In addition, the programme also encourages students to participate in activities that not only involve academic excellence but also to have a bit of excitement in their spare time at the faculty. Students can use their creativity and intelligent in finding answers for library quizzes or participating in traditional or modern games such as guessing games that are more exhilarating and adventurous. The built-in relationship will not cease as the program ends but will continue as long as the student is still studying at the university and educators will continue to cooperate with the library to improve the standard of education and raising the university's name. Library 4 You provides a win-win situation between the UPM communities and the library as these programmes can be a platform for patrons to fulfil their needs and requirements and for the library to get an excellent source of information to enhance and improve their facilities and services in satisfying all the users.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This program handled by PSAS is hopefully could be as an example and best practices to other academic library in shaping good relationship between library and patron. Libraries from other universities are encouraged to hold similar programmes to spend

time with students and their educators. The library have to create a culture of mobility and get out of from their comfort zone (library building) to attract more users and demonstrate that the library is still relevant as the place of depository, preservation and dissemination of information and knowledge for the university community and its surroundings. This is where such "Library 4 You Program" help libraries shaping and revitalizing the relationships between patron and library.

This programme can be expanded by adding appropriate university activities and contents to increase the participation of interested students. Collaboration with the Student Affairs Division and other university departments can make the program more attractive and will increase the number of student engagement to participate in the organized events. Interested students however, may engage in business activities or open a booth for association membership participations. It is easier to disseminate useful information and knowledge to students and educators by conducting programs at each faculty within the university.

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