

Leveraging Library Resources: The University of Akron Model for Academic-Corporate Partnering

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Abstract: Corporations and non-profit organizations in the Akron region contract with the Corporate Services Center (CSC) operated by the University of Akron Libraries for library and information management services. A panel of librarians from the CSC will describe the CSC programmatic goals and processes. Two case studies will be presented describing the implementation of the CSC program in two different settings, a non-profit professional organization and a for-profit corporation. Information technologies utilized to enhance the effectiveness of the partnerships will be described. Attendees may consider the information presented as a unique partnership model.

Introduction

The University of Akron Libraries (UAL) actively seek corporate library partners in the Akron Region. The mission of the Libraries' Corporate Services Center is to form "a consortium of academic and corporate libraries centered at The University of Akron for the purposes of fostering collection strengths and library services in support of the intellectual and economic growth of the Akron area and its science and technology superiority." [1]

The goals of the program are to:

- Build collaborative collections
- Extend access to collections including OhioLINK
- Realize efficiencies through group purchasing
- Achieve recognition as a research center for polymer science and engineering and related disciplines
- Share searcher and subject expertise
- Provide cost effective training
- Become a "library for life" for students, corporate employees and researchers who live and work in the region

The historical and conceptual underpinnings of this academic corporate partnership effort have been presented at conferences and described in a previous publication. [2, 3] Academic libraries have and are providing services to corporations in their communities. Most often these services include reference assistance, literature searching and document delivery. The University of Akron Corporate Services Center (CSC) is unique because it customizes the services it offers according to corporate clients' needs and is responsive to changes in those needs over time. Critical to the success of the CSC is recruitment and retention of library professionals who are committed to the success of the CSC and actively engaged in the process of discovering emerging client needs. The two case studies which follow will demonstrate the very different types of services the CSC provides.

The John H. Gifford Memorial Library, Rubber Division, ACS

The Rubber Division (RD) is a division of the American Chemical Society (ACS). The Division's 3000 members include scientists and engineers from industry and academics from

around the world who share an interest in rubber and the allied industries. The RD started in 1909 with its headquarters in Akron, Ohio. The organization holds biannual meetings in locations throughout the United States. The RD publishes technical meeting papers and books, offers correspondence and educational workshops, and awards scholarships for undergraduate and graduate study.

The John H. Gifford Library is the library for the RD. The library is “virtual” in the sense that all materials are part of the collection of The University of Akron Libraries (UAL). The library is a fee-based service offering literature searches, document delivery, sales of meeting papers and symposia, and book loans. The services of the library are offered to anyone seeking information about rubber; RD members receive discounts as one of the benefits of membership.

The Rubber Division and the University of Akron (UA) have a long standing relationship for the operation of a “rubber” library. The RD library was started in 1946 following World War II. [4] The UA is contracted by the Division to provide library services. The librarian is an employee of the UA but also attends all Division staff meetings and functions. Approximately 75% of the librarian’s time is devoted to RD activities and 25% to UAL duties.

The Rubber Division benefits from the partnership in many ways. All Division members have access to a professional librarian at a large university library. In the current climate of cost cutting and downsizing, many companies do not have a corporate library or have eliminated the position. The librarian archives Division publications and meeting papers. The librarian serves on the RD publication and education committees providing knowledge of publishing practices from an academic and librarian “point-of-view.” The UAL provides collection management for materials purchased by the Division and the consortial buying power of OhioLINK saves the RD money. Costs would be higher if the RD had to purchase materials and subscriptions on its own.

The University of Akron Libraries also benefit from the partnership. An additional librarian with subject expertise in science, technology, and business is on the staff. Many of the reference questions at the UAL Science & Technology Library relate to science or engineering, but business and nursing questions are common as well. The RD librarian is available to cover the reference desk during illnesses and vacations. The Rubber Division librarian serves as the bibliographer and liaison for mathematics and statistics. The librarian also serves on UAL ad-hoc committees as needed.

In addition to the benefits to both organizations, the partnership between UAL and the RD has resulted in several initiatives during the past two years to protect the Division’s intellectual property and increase visibility for its publications. These initiatives include:

- Negotiating a royalty agreement between Rapra and the Division for the sale of technical papers.
- Obtaining ISSN numbers for Division publications
- Registering Division publications with the Copyright Clearance Center.
- Submitting the Division’s technical papers to new databases for indexing and abstracting.

Rapra is a polymer consultancy and publisher located in the United Kingdom. Rapra produces the *Polymer Library* database, an electronic version of *Rapra Abstracts*, containing citations to journal articles, conference proceedings, etc. The RD's technical meeting papers have been indexed in the database since 1974. In exchange for indexing and abstracting the papers, Rapra was allowed to sell the papers with no royalty payment to the RD. A new agreement was negotiated by the RD librarian in 2003. Starting in 2004, Rapra pays a 50% royalty on each paper sold. The new agreement allows the RD library to obtain additional revenue from the sale of meeting papers that was previously unpaid.

The RD began publishing meeting papers in 1933, educational symposia in 1977, and CD-ROMs of meeting papers in 2001. International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSN) are the standard method to identify serials publications. Applications for ISSNs for these materials were submitted to the Library of Congress in 2003. The ISSNs were then submitted to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC). This allowed the library to register the publications with the CCC and to obtain copyright protection. An additional benefit is the copyright royalties the Division receives from those making photocopies of these publications. The British Library (BL) and the Canadian Institute of Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI) have these publications in their holdings and use them for document delivery. BL and CISTI were both notified that these publications were now registered with the CCC and agreed to pay royalties when applicable.

RD meeting papers were only indexed in the Rapra database prior to 2003. Several new database producers were contacted in 2003 in an effort to increase the exposure of these publications. The two databases producers approached were Chemical Abstracts (CA) and Applied Polymer Literature (APOLLIT). Both companies reviewed these materials and found them appropriate for inclusion in their databases. CA and APOLLIT receive complementary copies of the meeting papers on CD-ROM for indexing and abstracting. Users of these two databases are directed to contact the RD if they wish to purchase copies of these papers. Librarians, scientists, and engineers worldwide are now able to access information on RD publications that may have been previously unavailable to them.

All of these actions have resulted in greater opportunities for the Rubber Division. A new royalty agreement with Rapra provides the RD library with additional revenue. Obtaining ISSNs for Division publications and registering them with the CCC protects the RD's intellectual property. Indexing and abstracting of Division publications through multiple channels (Rapra, CA, and APOLLIT) allows the RD library to reach a worldwide audience. Purchasers of meeting papers are the most likely users of the library and represent additional marketing opportunities for library services and other RD publications.

The RD has also benefited greatly from the use of technology in the John H. Gifford Memorial Library. Formerly, all billing and invoicing for library services was done manually with a paper based system. Now, all accounting and billing is done electronically using QuickBooks software. This has greatly reduced the amount of paperwork and time devoted to billing. Credit cards are required for all transactions. No more waiting for the "check in the mail." Payment is guaranteed for both domestic and international transactions. Document delivery is accomplished via e-mail (PDF) for most requests. This has greatly reduced postage costs for the RD and offers RD library patrons the convenience of desktop access for articles.

Many professional societies make their technical papers and/or conference proceedings available for purchasing and downloading via the Internet. This represents another opportunity where technology can play an important role for the RD library. The RD library is investigating deploying an online system for the sale of meeting papers. Preliminary research indicates that grants may be available to pay or offset the cost of this project.

The Rubber Division had many needs that were outside the realm of “traditional” librarian duties. The expertise and experience of a professional librarian has resulted in many successes for the organization. At the same time, costs have been reduced and library revenue has been increased. These successes provide opportunities for the growth of the library as it reaches a wider audience for its products and services. These successes would have not been possible without the support of both The University of Akron Libraries’ and the Rubber Division’s leaders who were not afraid to “think outside the box.” Finally, the utilization of technology has brought the library into the 21st century.

Advanced Elastomer Systems Information Center

In 1991 Monsanto (later Solutia) and Exxon Chemical (now ExxonMobil Chemical) entered into a joint venture forming Advanced Elastomer Systems (AES) to develop and market their technologies in thermoplastic elastomers. In 1995, AES moved into their current headquarters in Akron, Ohio, consolidating personnel from the two parent companies from various locations.

Each side of the joint venture had library services provided from company information centers prior to their consolidation. The new company knew they needed library services although there was neither a library available to move with them, nor personnel to offer the service. How could they meet their information and library needs for this market-driven, technology intense new business?

One of the reasons the new company was locating to Akron was the history of a concentration of industrial and academic focus on polymer and rubber technology. AES hoped to take advantage of resources in the area, including The University of Akron. The University of Akron has always been a community-centered urban university. This partnership is a direct result of the University’s goal to foster closer ties with the local business community. Conversations between the Vice President of Technology of AES and University representatives from the College of Polymer Science and Engineering and the University Libraries led to a formal arrangement beginning in 1996 for The University of Akron Libraries to provide library services to AES. The University Libraries recover all expenses incurred for the project along with an overhead percentage. Although the financial benefit for the University Libraries is modest, the good-will and cooperation the project has fostered far exceeds the financial benefits.

The University Libraries hired a professional librarian who would be totally dedicated to the AES library project and would work at their facility. Her task was to organize the materials they already had, build a small core collection, and provide services that would support the business imperatives of AES. Service would be extended to all AES locations – the headquarters office in Akron; technical centers in Brussels, Singapore, and Japan; plants in Wadsworth, Pensacola, and

Wales; and sales offices worldwide. Once the groundwork was laid, another support person was hired by the University at the end of 1996. The AES Information Center was born!

This arrangement provides two staff totally dedicated to AES. AES recognized they did not have the expertise needed to manage a library function. Having the University Libraries manage the Information Center freed AES management to focus on integrating the Center's services into the mainstream of the business, rather than being involved with the day-to-day operation of the library. AES employees now have access to wide-ranging information resources. The on-site library was organized into a corporate Lotus Notes database which was created by the library staff. This database is replicated globally through the AES network, and is used to share books, patents, journals, and other materials such as internal reports and research documents. In addition, local employees have access to The University of Akron Libraries and OhioLINK books and materials.

With the partnership arrangement, AES had access to the resources of a large university library. There was no need to build a large local collection. This allowed resources that would have been used to purchase "just in case" materials to be used to deliver services that impact the bottom line. AES is a relatively small company. Many publishers and vendors products are out of reach because of the pricing models used. Being part of a consortial buying group through the Corporate Services Center provides an opportunity for AES to take advantage of group buying power.

The Information Center continues to thrive and the staff are integrated into many AES activities not always associated with libraries and information centers. The proactive staff are active in many AES teams. The librarian actually spurred AES to their first Web presence through her educational efforts and was a member of the original Web development team. Library staff continue working with the intranet development team, providing content, training, and design consulting for the group.

Safety is the highest priority for AES, and the library staff has supported that whole-heartedly. As a member of the Site Safety Team, the library staff acts as the *Safety Newsletter* editor. Because of their involvement with the intranet, the staff also acts as the intranet Webmaster for safety, working with personnel globally.

Another area of key concern for AES is intellectual property management. The library staff assumed all responsibility for the administration of the scientific laboratory notebooks crucial for patenting activities. As a member of the AES Patent Committee, the librarian has established patent monitoring activities to track competitors' patents and protect AES's freedom to operate.

The AES library staff is a resource for various other teams, both ad-hoc and on-going. They provide in-depth research, analysis and organization of knowledge for both business teams, such as market focus initiatives, as well as technical research teams.

AES Information Center staff promote use of their information products and their expertise through training. The AES library staff has created numerous workshops and delivered them locally and to regional offices in Detroit and in Brussels. These workshops range from making

the best use of the Internet, patent research and specialized information resources to how to use lab books, how to use software applications and how to upload information to the AES intranet. Before AES completed their own classroom at their headquarters, AES library staff used the digital classroom in the University of Akron Libraries to conduct workshops designed specifically for AES. The University has also played a role to provide “unimpeded” access to the Internet through an off-AES-network with Virtual Private Network access to the University. The AES firewall, like most corporate firewalls, makes access to some websites impossible or very difficult. Bridging the gap between the AES and The University of Akron networks has given AES another option for information resources.

AES plans to exploit resources available through the consortial arrangements developed by the CSC of The University of Akron. In addition, they will have an opportunity to build upon resources now available from ExxonMobil. This includes exploring new technologies like electronic laboratory notebooks and Web conferencing to extend training to additional AES locations.

Conclusion

These two case studies highlight both the shared and unique information needs of the clients involved. Both libraries answer reference questions, conduct literature searches, provide current awareness updates, and obtain documents. The staff in both libraries are aggressive leaders in incorporating technology into the workplace to add value to their products and services. In both situations the personnel are actively engaged in identifying the unique information needs of the corporate client, even when those needs are outside the scope of traditional library services, and adding services to meet those needs.

The librarian for the John H. Gifford Memorial Library is directly involved in enhancing the Rubber Division’s publication program by managing the technical paper archive, negotiating royalty agreements, obtaining ISSN numbers for Division publications, registering Division publications with the Copyright Clearance Center, and negotiating with database creators for inclusion of Division publications. The result of these efforts is increased exposure for and income from Division publications and protection of the Division’s intellectual property asset.

Intellectual property management is also an import issue for staff at the AES Information Center. The staff are responsible for administration of the company’s scientific laboratory notebook program and tracking competitor’s patents. They are also integral members of key corporate teams including Web/intranet, site safety, and market and technical focus teams. In all of these areas they provide training opportunities at all corporate sites.

Key elements to the success of the Akron model for library partnering include the presence of “champions” for the concept of partnering in the University and in the corporation; sufficient, dedicated and engaged personnel; identification of the unique needs of each client and tailoring library services to those needs; flexibility and innovation; willingness and ability to extend to services beyond traditional library services; recognition of the importance of managing intellectual property; and utilization of available and relevant technology.

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