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What Students Want

WHAT STUDENTS WANT

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ABSTRACT

A lot has been said and written about the need for libraries to transform services to suit the needs of the new library users – from primary school through higher education and community libraries. At university level, librarians face challenges regarding adequacy and the quality of services they provide. The needs of under-graduates may differ from those of post-graduates – all served by one library. When university programmes are accredited and the institutions audited by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and professional councils, adequacy of library services as key resources in education and research is also assessed. Library users in the form of students and staff participate in sessions assessing the library services. Therefore, their opinion of library services matters. The question is: do we know what our library users, particularly students, want? Can our libraries as they are at present adequately provide for those needs? How can our libraries successfully re-invent themselves to meet the changing needs of the users? This paper will attempt to answer the questions by addressing issues around students' learning preferences: are existing library facilities and services designed to support learning preferences of the cohort of students we serve? Findings of a survey of preferences of students of the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) w.r.t. learning spaces; methods; times; other facilities; etc. together with limitations experienced by the libraries will be shared. TUT is a multi-campus institution of higher learning with nine campuses serving more than 43,000 students. The campuses are spread over three provinces: six (6) in Gauteng; two (2) in Mpumalanga and one (1) in Limpopo. Born out of a merger of three technikons in 2004, disparities in infrastructure, facilities, equipment and staffing together with location differences; i.e. city, urban and distant campuses alone pose a big challenge with regard to equity of service provision; let alone adequately providing for the cohort of students entering the university annually.

Summary

Learning preferences of the cohort of students are changing: are existing library facilities and services designed to support their learning preferences? Findings of a survey of preferences of students of the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) w.r.t. learning spaces; methods; times; other facilities; etc. together with limitations experienced by the libraries will be shared.

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