Book Reviews

Managing suppliers and partners for the academic library

David Ball, with contributions from Jane Ryland and Jill Beard. London: Facet Publishing, 2005. 184pp. ISBN 1-85604-547-1

Universities are facing fundamental changes on two fronts: the effects of the electronic revolution and its impact on educational technology and research, and the emphasis on widening participation and collaboration between institutions. This book focuses on two types of relationships now critical to academic libraries: those with commercial suppliers and those with partner institutions.

Suppliers are defined both as publishers and aggregators providing materials, electronic and print, and systems vendors supplying library management systems and virtual learning environments. The authors emphasise the importance of the right specification and ongoing contract management both at the outset and throughout the life of the contract. Other issues covered include the information chain, issues in electronic purchasing such as the pros and cons of the "big deal", licensing constraints, consortia, pricing models and outsourcing. An important conclusion highlighted by Ball is that user involvement can often be left out once a contract process is underway. Issues of concern to librarians rather than those of users are highlighted. While it is not suggested users should be made to pay, the economic consequences of their demands should be made clear to them.

The second section of the book covers relationships between HE and FE colleges and the NHS. The relationship with these two sectors are opposite in one fundamental sense. Whereas in the "franchising" relationships with FE colleges the HEI is the commissioner; with the NHS it is the NHS that commissions the service from the HEI. There are however many similarities and, as for suppliers, an effective management of the partnership, with its formalised terms and conditions, is involved.

The book is particularly well illustrated with evidence from a wide range of studies to support its points, with examples ranging from the actual number of documents in institutional repositories to the percentage of journals in blanket deals actually consulted by users. Examples are taken both from UK, academic and public sector, and USA.

The authors conclude that the current environment offers the opportunity for university libraries to contribute to the development of HE provision and to influence in their favour the commercial environment. This book offers a comprehensive yet succinct guide in support of librarians working towards this end.

Helen Edwards. Head of Information Services, London Business School

Why Intranets Fail (and How to Fix Them)

Luke Tredinnick. Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2004. 174pp. ISBN 1-84334-068-2.

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