

Monetization Solutions for Today's Libraries: Singapore Management University (SMU) Library as an Example

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Abstract. The library is a rich repository of information and knowledge and have access to many sources of information and knowledge. We believe that there is great potential for academic libraries to find ways to monetize their digital assets and services as a means of building new revenue and profit streams, both in B2B and B2C markets. Furthermore, we believe that a stronger financial position resulted from divergent revenue streams will bring more advanced technologies, resources and talents to the library, which therefore reinforce the competitive advantage to libraries. In this essay, we discussed the demand from the public for products and services offered by the library. By addressing the demand with proposed value-added products and services, we plot out the monetization implementation for the library, of which the business unit and business model operation are discussed in detail.

Keywords: Libraries; demands; monetization; business models.

1. Introduction

Academic libraries have been unarguably adjudged as the hub on which academic activities, that is, teaching, learning and research revolve. The value of academic library to the users has long been assumed. Higher education in the twenty-first century globally has been characterized and driven on business ethos, such as competition on student enrolment and financial support. Academic libraries all over the world therefore are in a serious competition to contribute to their universities' competitive advantage. With the development of web 2.0 and digitalization, the role and services of academic libraries is changing in the recent decade. A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. SMU aims at generating leading-edge research with global impact and produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU's city campus is a state-of-the-art facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community [7]. The SMU Library consist of two functional libraries, namely the Li Ka Shing Library and the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library. The collection in the Li Ka Shing Library is interdisciplinary and covers the broad fields of business, economics and commerce with special strengths in international business and management. The collection at the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library is designed to provide resources necessary to support teaching and research by the School of Law and courses in Law taken by students of other schools in SMU. It includes access to materials of the main jurisdictions of the common law that have influenced Singaporean law [6].

With SMU's strong background on business and management as well as the law discipline, we anticipate that there is huge potential for SMU Library to monetize its knowledge assets and gain substantial revenue and profit streams. In this essay, we discussed the demand from the public for products and services offered by the library. By addressing the demand with proposed value-added products and services, we plot out the monetization implementation for the library, of which the business unit and business model operation are discussed in detail.

2. Demand Analysis & Value Provision

(1) Demand on business information

The Li Ka Shing business Library and the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library bring with advantage for SMU Library to develop its capacity to address the demand on business information from the public.

(2) Demand on professional services

While the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library and the Law School in SMU has the potential to provide law related professional services, on the other hand, the strong networks and academic professions of SMU are precious resources for the SMU library to develop its capacity to meet the demand on professional services, including consulting and training services.

In the following section, we will discuss the demand in these three areas in detail. And after we are analysing the demand, we need to think about how to address these demands. If the library is to be positioned not only a non-profit service provider to the university, but also to broaden the range of services it offers to the client group with revenue schemes, then it is necessary to identify what value-added services the library can provide to meet their needs. In an era of increasing choices, academic libraries all over the world, like the SMU libraries are faced with finding the best way to add value to their services so as to attract customers (users) and remain in business. Academic libraries must incorporate new services that provide leap and add value to users.

2.1 Demand on Business Information

Singapore enterprises operate in a global market must compete with other producers for new alternative technologies and products. As a result, business managers need an input of competitive business information and must manage and make the most of this information. While there are numerous channels for them to access and obtain information, the fact is that most information is fragmented and distributed in different ways. For example, a team of entrepreneurs who is planning for a start-up or a project, they need a wide range of information such as legal compliance, how to prepare business plan, how to do market and industry analysis, cash flow and profit planning etc. It implies that the team need to spend time to searching all related information, and it will be quite time consuming as they need to ensure that the information from massive sources is reliable and useful. Furthermore, some information can only be accessed with subscription or add-on payment, it will be troublesome if they need to duplicate the business process with different information providers. There is a large demand from information seekers who need integrated information which is accurate, reliable and up-to-date, and provided in a professional manner. This will be where the library comes in handy to offer products and services to fulfil the needs. In addition, publishers tend to cooperate with highly knowledge intensive institutions, such as universities, book stores to licensing their products. It is hard or expensive for companies or individuals to purchase books or subscribe journal articles from publishers. E-book and e-journal with economic price is highly demanded by the public. The library has a strong connection with almost all big publishers and academic database providers, there are great opportunity for the library to re-pack their resources into value-added collections for customers, to produce digital assets of e-book or e-journal articles to the public.

2.2 Addressing the Demand: Value Added Collections

All libraries are specialised in providing a variety of collections including business information. The Library collection is the hub of service delivery. SMU Library can make use of its rich collection repository to consolidate and integrate various information and knowledge to provide distinctive product and service. Two kinds of value pack can be introduced to customers. One is a pre-set value pack which developed by library business specialists, they are digital products which consist of comprehensive information in a specific area or topic. The other one is a customized value pack which is developed according to customers' specific requirement. It could include various business information requested by customers. Selective e-book and e-journal articles are another kind of product the library can provide to the public. All the product items should be reviewed regularly by the librarian specialists to have content and catalogue update from time to time.

Demand	Product & Service	Implementation	Key value
Business Information	Value added collections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Comprehensive information pack ■ Customized information pack ■ E-book and e-journal article 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Business specialists develop a list of hot topics and integrate relevant information and knowledge to form a set of information pack (E.g Entrepreneurship series; Business & Research Development series etc.) ■ Business specialists discuss with customers with their specific needs, searching information and knowledge from publishers and databases, integrating and re-packing them into a new information pack. ■ Business specialists pick-up selective e-books and e-articles on business & management related topics for customers. 	One-stop service(time saving). Comprehensiveness. Customized. Reliability, velocity, validity, accuracy, currency. Reasonable price. High quality of service (unique customer experience)

2.3 Demand on Professional Services – Consulting and Training

Having access to legal, accounting and other expertise is important to help business grow as rapidly and efficiently as possible. Nowadays, more and more companies seek collaboration with professional service firms such as consulting firms, accounting firms or law firms for customized services. It's necessary to consult an attorney or law professional before making any business decision which may have legal ramifications. These decisions could include setting up or altering the terms of a partnership or corporation, checking for compliance with regulations in new locales where you hope to do business, obtaining trademarks or patents, tax planning etc[10]. However, most of the time, the charge from a law firm is quite high, and sometimes companies or start-ups may just want to consult on general regulation/compliance on specified area with limited budget. For most SMEs, they might not have their own law department and law consultants, in case of any arising legal cases, they will need a reliable and stable partner who can provide legal services. For large enterprises, even if they have their own law consultants, they will need updates on legal regulations which are changing due to political or business reasons. They still need to partner with a reliable institution which can provide professional advice or comment. Besides the legal field, the demand on business solution consultation is increasing due to complexity of the business environment and fierce competition. On the other hand, as many companies realize that knowledge is an essential capital for gaining competitive advantages, they invest a great amount of fund for training programs for their employees. According to some surveys, the most popular training programs for companies are mainly in business and management area. Such as project management, leadership development as well as some accounting and financial management training. The SMU Library, with its professional team and knowledge repository, have the advantage to provide professional services to organizations.

2.4 Addressing the Demand: Value Added Consultation and Training Program

Training is perhaps the biggest potential growth area. As we are in a knowledge economy with rapid development of technology, the need for quality training grows with it. While library will be specialist on training courses like information management or information retrieval, besides its own research librarians on different disciplines, there are also rich sources of business and law specialists that the SMU Library can reach out for organizing training in various topics. Professors in business

school and the law school will be the great source of trainers. More difficult is to act as consultants for local or specialized businesses. The library needs to have a team of professional consultants to provide high quality consulting services (including full-time and part-time experienced consultants). As a uniqueness of library services, training courses can be supplemented with corresponding information pack or learning pack. The library can also make use of the alumni connection to collaborate with their workplace for various training programs.

Demand	Product & Service	Implementation	Key value
Consultation and training	<p>Value added consultation and training program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Training course on Business & Management topics ■ Consultation on business solutions ■ Legal compliance consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A team of librarians with speciality in different business areas to conduct regular training courses in popular topics. ■ Collaborating with business school to appoint professors to be guest speakers of training courses. ■ Librarian specialists conduct Regular business consultation services. ■ Collaborating with business school and law school professors for providing consultation services. 	<p>Diversified business and management training and consulting services.</p> <p>Specified legal compliance consultation services.</p> <p>Reliable and easy to access.</p> <p>Good learning environment.</p> <p>Reasonable price.</p> <p>High quality of service (professional team)</p>

In addition to the proposed value-added products and services, there are three important aspects in the monetization process. The first two served as foundations for the library to execute the value offering to customers, the last one enhances the image of the library and help to sustain loyal customers.

2.5 Value Added Library Personnel

The quality of staff in the library will determine the services they will render to the users. Right mixed of staff in the library have a significant relationship with the services they will render to users. Value-added services in libraries starts with the right calibre of staff that understand what service provision implies in the competitive business environment nowadays. Right calibre of staff will always put smile on his or her face when rendering services to users in academic library at the same time they will always go further in meeting user's needs and expectations. User satisfaction with academic library services is a function of the quality of the personnel and the services of the library, well qualified and experienced staff will render added value service to the users. In SMU library, there are different functional areas in different disciplines, for example, administration and operations function, library analytics, learning and information services in different disciplines (business, economic, social sciences, information systems and law), information access and resources (electronic resources, collections etc.), library technology and innovation function, scholarly communication function, IT support function etc. While the service team is quite comprehensive and well organised in the SMU library, we can see that these functional areas and personnel arrangement mainly aim at serving the internal users (students and staff) and the library operation itself. While keep maintaining the high quality of its services, the library should set up a professional team to handle businesses with external customers, including individual and corporates. It should bring

unique and superior customer experience to consumers throughout a complete business process from enquiry, ordering, purchasing to payment and after-sale services.

2.6 Value Added Processing System & Dissemination of Information

The retrieval mechanism of the library which reflects a gamut of activities rendered in processing the information resources will affect value-added services to the users. The cataloguing, classification, abstracting and indexing methods the library adopts will affect the retrieval of the information. The library should adopt best practices to provide clientele with effective retrieval process. An effective business portal can be created as a navigator for external customers to complete the business order and access to the digital assets.

In order to satisfy users of the library, the information that the library resources contain should be disseminated devoid of barriers. In a competitive business environment where libraries and information centres operate today, deliberate attempts should be made to disseminate information most appropriately and professionally so that library users will enjoy value-added services. Customers perceived value as speed of accessing and browsing anytime and anywhere, Library would use social network sites or media such as Facebook, LinkedIn for service delivery in the areas of selective dissemination of information (SDI); abstracting and indexing services, current awareness services (CAS), compilation of bibliography and reading list, new arrival services and so on [5].

2.7 Value Added Space Service – Library as a Third Place

In the words of Robert Putnam, “People may go to the library looking mainly for information, but they find each other there.” Libraries function in a variety of different roles, reflecting their community and its needs. Libraries offer not only just books and information, they are also placing where people meet, socialise and connect to community. Libraries hold a strong position within their local communities, especially amongst their regular patrons. They are physical places to visit, providing interaction with others in the community and resources for learning or creating. This means what they offer is not online environment only, at the same time, they serve the community, both those with high levels of technological literacy and those without. Libraries are safe and trusted environments for a variety of community members. As our society becomes more embedded in the digital-knowledge economy, it is essential for them to support both users and non-users of technology [2]. Individuals will need a place like the library, to socialize and connect with others, to learn and play, in particular, the alumni group will be in favour of the library as a third place. Organizations will also in high demand of the space provided by libraries, especially the function rooms for brainstorming and organizational learning. SMU Library can consider arranging a coffee corner for library visitors to mingle and share together. Publishers can be invited to hold book exhibition for faculties, students as well as patrons.

3. Monetization Implementation

3.1 Setting up of a Business Unit

As we analyzed in the previous section about the product and service that bring value to customers as a great potential for monetization for the library. Now we should consider to implementation and operation process for the monetization. First of all, a business unit should be set up to oversee all the businesses with customers.

Business Unit Functions

Handling value-added collections for Business Information needs

Librarian specialists should have solid education or research background in business and management related areas. They should be able to search, consolidate and integrate valuable business information that meet up customers’ needs, especially needs from corporations.

In addition to professional data quality, our packages after processing and integration have superior convenience, which is our biggest selling point. When users face a huge resource library, common category search is not the most effective, it is impossible for a user to read all and then select what he

needs. We have meticulously categorized the resource library and extracted the key words of the essence, and then carried out multiple combinations based on keywords to enable the user to obtain the most appropriate business information package according to their own description. This not only retains the essential information within the processing power of the user, but also prevents the user from being overwhelmed when faced with massive information, thereby increasing the effective conversion rate of the information and saving the user's investment time.

Handling professional services – Consulting and Training

Since consulting and training will be the core business for the library in the future development of the library's monetization, the library should be equipped with a professional team to provide high quality consulting and training services. The section head who responsible for the professional service business should also develop partnership with the business school and the law school to outsource some of its business to the professors.

Handling marketing matters

In the business unit, there should be communication specialists who can plan and implement marketing strategy to promote the products and services offered by the library to the public [3]. They should also help to maintain the customer profile and relationship in a central CRM database or any other internal portal. They should be able to conduct market research or customer survey so as to provide insights to the professional team on new product and service development.

Handling finance matters

Monetization business will inevitably bring with revenue streams. There should be financial staff who can handle the daily transaction operation, cash flow planning, financial management etc.

3.2 Business Model

(1) Freemium subscription model:

Basically, the objective of freemium subscription model is to get the users hooked to the free information, thereby motivating them to subscribe for the paid plan and also promote our service via word-of-mouth.

The freemium subscription model enables readers to view most of our content for free. There's no limit placed on the number of articles they can read, as long as they stick to the non-proprietary or non-editorial content. If readers want content that's exclusively the published papers, such as an analysis on current political or economic happenings or our editorial and packaged business guidance, they will need to subscribe.

More specifically, when readers land on the homepage, they seemingly have access to all the content. However, when they click on an article that is considered premium, they are presented with an option to subscribe. Similarly, when users want to have access to the packaged business guidance which is our main product and have been mentioned before, they can read the first few high-quality chapters for free.

The freemium subscription model allows us to "hook" readers with their content. By giving away free content, we are able to build trust with our readers and create a loyal following. Giving readers access to most of a website's content also lets them check the quality of the content to ensure that it's valuable. If we regularly produce high-quality free content, users will be more likely to subscribe because they'll know that they'll get the same quality of content with their premium subscription.

In addition to this, with the help of the data from your free users' behaviours, we can easily find out what features of our product are/aren't their favourites and which segments of the market are getting the most out of our product[9].

(2) Information intermediary

Information intermediaries are communication vehicles that transfer concerns between buyers and sellers. In this case, we gathered, edited, and marketed what the school of law can contribute; information consumers purchased discrete bundles of information in the form of periodicals and monographs; libraries amassed large collections of published material for the communities they served. We have always digitized monographs and offer large, but homogeneous and packaged repositories of information open to anyone willing to pay the subscription fee.

More importantly, targeted to those companies that need to enter the foreign market, we introduce these companies experienced lawyers and researchers in SMU school of law to consult regional laws and regulations. We recommend qualified legal advisers for the start-ups as well because we can do the research and then have ability to uncover customer concerns and trends, and position these issues within a relevant context., which means we can point out the most suitable person.

An information intermediary is an independent, profit maximizing economic information processing system performing its activities (information acquisition, processing, and dissemination) on behalf of companies' information needs. We can be viewed as any system that mediates between the producers and consumers of information[1]. Meanwhile, when we match the information sources and users request, we can store customers' request for information, user profiles, and contingent feedback for repeated use as well as for analytical purpose.

Once information and the legal consultancy service has been collected and organized by the information intermediary, it costs very little to redistribute. The marginal cost of the information itself is zero, and the costs of physical distribution are very small, and tend to decrease as electronic networks and new modes of communication become available. However, the time and attention of clients remain fixed and scarce. The cost of information distribution can be viewed as the opportunity cost of time for the client group plus the cost of distribution. Most of the information intermediary's costs will be fixed; the costs of gathering the information and organizing the information are usually independent of the number of clients[1].

After the transaction is complete, we can charge commission fee from both buyers and sellers which refers to the companies and school of law. The commission fee is 10 percentage of the transaction fee and it always can be negotiated by themselves about the proportion of capital contribution.

(3) Professional service – training and consulting

One of the revenue streams of the library can be gained from the professional service provided to the public. Professional service business model works on charging money for the time spent by their professional staff to deliver expertise.

The main services we offer can be divided into two parts: training and consulting. Customers who register to attend the training course provided by the library will need to pay a specific amount of the course fee. This kind of service is open to the public since we have many various levels training courses targeted at different customers.

Consulting service will be a potential area for the library to gain high revenue. Business solution consultation will be charged depending on the duration of the service. When we develop consulting service, specialization is the easiest way to differentiate us from others. The reality is that specialization tends to be associated with higher growth and profitability. When we specialize, we can be much more efficient and targeted with our business development activities. In spite of this, It is a remarkable fact that the professional services space is a different world than it was just a few years ago, in part due to a dramatic increase in customer expectations. Now more than ever, customers require more visibility into projects, ask for faster quoting and scheduling, and expect billing statements to include a detailed analysis of what they're paying for. As a result, we not only implement traditional consulting business model but also has added new business model to the traditional consulting offering. We build an extensive network of senior, highly experienced, independent consultants. What is more, clients have a say in which consultants they would like to work with and we are trying to find the best match between client and consultant. As clients become more sophisticated in buying consulting services, they can make the most suitable and satisfied buying decisions in this situation [8].

Library talents can gain experience and (client-specific) knowledge during project delivery to customers as well. Therefore, we conduct regular research on our clients. This is especially true of our target client group. The better we understand them, their needs and priorities, the faster we are likely to grow and the more profitable we can be — provided us adjust what we are doing based on the research results [4].

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