Rolling Out THE Red Carpet

Is there an argument for charging for enhanced services?

No Library likes to restrict access to services, but in these hard economic times we are having to review what are our core services, and which are enhanced? And if the service is enhanced, is there an argument to introduce charging?

Before Voyager the University of Plymouth restricted access to Inter Library Loan (ILL) to post-graduate and academic staff; with the introduction of a self-service model we were unable to filter requests by patron group.

Steps towards implementation

- Define core services
- Seek approval of the definition from library stake-holders
- Seek approval from university management – Information Management Group (IMG)
- Decide whether to hypothecate the income and /or protect existing funding?
- Decide level of fee: Full economic cost / full fee / subsidised?
- Should it apply to all patron groups?
- At what point in the workflow is the fee incurred?
- Consider staffing, procedures, and costs
- Plan marketing and communication strategy

Example: Inter-Library Loans

The library's materials budget is top-sliced from the university budget and is intended to fund materials to support the teaching and research needs of the university.

The cost of providing the ILL service has increased and threatens to absorb a greater proportion of the diminishing total materials budget. Undergraduate information needs are expected to be met primarily from existing resources and by library purchase, so ILLs should be an exceptional requirement. Researchers have access to research funds.

The IMG agreed that the charges would apply to all users, and that charges for renewals and uncollected items would commence immediately, but charges for requests would be delayed for a year to gather further support from the academics.

Checklist for implementing ILL charges

- Confirm scale of charges; Renewal fee will be £3.50, uncollected charge will be at least £9.00 (full cost recovery including search fees)
- Create new fee types
- Train Document Delivery staff to apply the fee to the patron's account
- Update online payment procedure to include new fee type
- Arrange for income to be transferred from customer services to materials budget
- Decide timing and date of implementation
- Plan publicity for current and potential users
- Write or revise help screens, email headers, etc.

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