

Developing a Value Proposition Statement for Albertsons Library

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With all the changes happening in higher education and the resources Libraries offer, and with the competition libraries face from search engines like Google, the success of academic libraries of the future lies in identifying what our users value and what a library is uniquely positioned to offer. Many academic libraries are undertaking complex projects to document their value through studies that [correlate student grades with library use](#). Albertsons Library will begin a project this year to investigate ways we can ethically integrate library use data with campus data to document student success and gain data for planning purposes. These types of studies tend to focus on value to one primary user group – administrators.

I was interested in developing a [value proposition statement](#) from a broader user perspective, such as a student point of view. This interest is a direct outgrowth of the prioritization process undertaken in 2013, where we discovered we couldn't answer the question "how much time do staff spend on value added activities?" The first step in answering this question is identifying what is of value to our user groups.

With that in mind, I put together a small team that undertook a 4 step value proposition process outlined by [Michael Skok](#) in Forbes:

1. Define the user problem the library solves via the 4Us - a problem that is (for the user) unworkable, unavoidable, urgent and lacks good solutions (underserved).
2. Qualify the problem - is it [blatant, latent, aspirational or critical](#)? A problem that a library solves that is blatant and critical is of the most value. Does the solution address "white space" – areas where few other competitors are operating?
3. Evaluate whether the library's solution is unique and compelling. Is it transformative? Are there barriers that keep others from offering the same solution? Does it yield value and cost rewards for users?
4. Measure potential customer adaptation – the Gain/Pain Ratio

From this process, a value statement emerges. The most challenging part - to view value from the library users' point of view and to continually challenge our assumptions that what we value is valued by our users. We started each step by focusing on undergraduate students, then tested our results by thinking of graduate students, faculty, community users and administrators. We regularly asked ourselves if what we proposed as a solution was unique to the library.

One wonderful tool we discovered was the [Gain/Pain Ratio](#) – a balance beam diagram with inertia in the center at the pivot point, and user pain points and user gains on either end of the bar. This diagram forced us to think of the effort that our users expend to use our services and resources, what it costs them to recoup the rewards of our resources. Although librarians like to say that what we offer is free, there is always some cost even if it is not direct or financial.

Albertsons Library's Value Proposition:

For users who face confusing, costly & time consuming options for completing projects, our experts, quality resources & tools provide timely, efficient, effective solutions.

At this point you might be asking, “So what? How is this helpful?” This value statement relates directly to our mission, will serve as a touch point when we evaluate what we are doing and why, and will help us set priorities. It is the first step toward identifying our Key Performance Indicators and developing methods of effectively measuring them.

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