

Global Focus: CLADEA Directors of Information Centers

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Introduction

In the last two years libraries faced multiple issues they had never dreamed of having to undergo. After the initial shock we, as librarians, knew that our services had to be delivered in the best way we could. Our patrons were in need, and we had to be there to assist them. Libraries were closed, our printed collections were unreachable, but we were sure that we had the tools and knowledge to offer good services. We were well prepared to go online thanks to years of selecting and evaluating digital resources, finding the best accesses, and working on having strong search interfaces and patron-oriented web sites.

Going over all the things we went through during the pandemic, let me share with you the top five things that impacted our group.

E-books

Most of our libraries already had strong e-book collections, but we needed more titles to replace our print collections, which could not be used. This was not an easy task, and we struggled with local and international publishers to get them. Some of our local publishers were not prepared, as they had not gone digital yet or had done so only partially. On the other hand, we found that international publishers needed to adapt themselves to our region regarding content proposals and prices. In both cases some of the selling options were really unfair and unacceptable. We can point out some of the things we had to deal with:

Packages: Some titles only available by purchasing packages.

Unavailability: Titles not sold to libraries in our region.

Uncertainty of permanence: Titles are removed from the collections without any warning.

High prices: Each year we have to pay for the books once again.

There are too many platforms and so many different conditions that it is confusing for patrons. There is no doubt that the market needs to evolve.

Consortia acquisitions

We negotiated with publishers, at national consortia level, using title-by-title lists to buy the material we needed for just one total price that we divided amongst us according to the number of students enrolled in each discipline. We also asked for customized access in each institution's website. Working together gave us the strength to get better prices.

CLADEA document delivery

For years we have been collaborating in our group with this service, which is most appreciated within our member institutions. During the lockdown, the service had a response

rate of 90%. It was the best way of reaching material we could not get from our own libraries when they were closed. And, for the first time since we set it up, we included other disciplines, not just business, to include all the colleges and institutes within our institutions.

Online annual meeting

In 2020 we decided to have our annual meeting; it was essential for the group to have a place and time to meet and exchange experiences. It was online, hosted by Colombia, and it included more than 100 attendees. Its focus was on sharing experiences in facing the pandemic, handling materials, and future reopening protocols. It was so reassuring knowing we were all in the same boat, with the same fears and challenges and trying to find the best way out. In 2021 we met again online, and the annual meeting was hosted by Perú. Being online allowed us to have presenters from different regions. We had a discussion panel with members from our sister groups: EBSLG, ABLD, APBSLG, and Africa to share thoughts on the value of information centers in the sustainability of business schools. This year we are back! Next October, within the framework of CLADEA's 57th International Congress in Guayaquil, Ecuador, we will meet for our XIXth annual meeting, and it will be a hybrid event.

Services for researchers

In many countries of the group, the lockdown lasted for months, almost a year. Our researchers needed unreachable printed material, so we had to be creative and develop special services for them. These included actions such as staff getting special permissions to go to the libraries, sending material by taxi, bus or cars, or new library networks in each city to share resources.

During the pandemic we could fully understand the value of our group, what it means to have colleagues supporting each other. Our group was highly important during the last two years in terms of:

- support
- information
- contact

It was always there!