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Evolving Intelligence

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WHITE PAPER

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The role of the corporate library is evolving to rival the digital age and availability of online resources. The caliber of the internal research process within the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries is fundamentally important to providing breakthrough results that feed the front end of pipelines that promise to deliver the new products of tomorrow. As Contract Research and Contract Manufacturing Organizations (CROs and CMOs) continue to evolve and provide increasingly important contributions to their customer's discovery and development priorities, implementing a customer-focused approach to corporate library services can turn a repository for dated literature into an invaluable information center for the library's constituents.

Many pharmaceutical companies continue to focus on cost cutting and rationalizations that have led to R&D facility closures and decreased budgets for corporate libraries.[3] These companies have become increasingly more reliant on CROs and CMOs to help fill their pipeline.[3] The corporate library at a CRO/CMO can enhance scientific performance by providing expert research and improving the chances of a customer project's success at all stages of the drug development pipeline. In fact, given the evolution and development of providers up the value chain in terms of their ability to make scientific contributions to a project's successful outcome, the investment and support of a high quality library is critical to this process.

A Customized Approach to Library Services

By implementing a user-focused approach to information needs, corporate libraries have the potential to benefit scientists working in the laboratory, business and finance colleagues with market research and competitive intelligence and assist numerous miscellaneous requests to help the organization make more informed and therefore potentially more intelligent decisions. The role of a corporate library can be extremely useful in streamlining crucial research. While maintaining journal collections and accessing rare articles or tracking down copies of patents or books will always be necessary, the corporate library in the healthcare space is evolving from the role of document repository to that of an information center, playing a critical role in the research process of the larger organization. This evolution is imperative for the library to remain relevant in a period of easy internet access and innovative search engines.

A corporate library's value can be measured by its business impact on an organization. One way of determining business impact would be to replace output measurements with outcome evaluation.[1] Traditional output measures only answer the questions of how many searches are performed or how often a tool is used.[1] These measurements do not ascertain the overall impact of how the organization is affected. Instead, output measures tend to be

library-focused, thinking about the effect on the library. Outcome can be evaluated by determining who users are, what their role in the organization is, and examining how the library contributes to their business functions.[1] Outcome evaluations tend to be more client-focused, thinking about the impact on the end-user and the organization as a whole.

The corporate librarian can use outcome evaluation to determine user groups within the organization. A user group is a department or area that has been identified as benefiting from library services. The library has to take a look at where the organization invests the most money when determining user groups. The majority of information requirements within pharmaceutical and biotechnology organizations fall within two categories: either science or business.[4]

From the Laboratory to the Library

Different outreach efforts can be developed for each user group within the organization based on their information needs. Outreach should be viewed as a marketing campaign for the library. The corporate librarian must be willing to "sell" services to the rest of the organization, advertising available resources as well as the skills of the library staff. Presenting to groups, generating awareness via internal communications resources and meeting with individual employees are ways the corporate librarian can connect their invaluable services to the needs of potential users.

An example of a user group within the organization could be a scientific department in need of certain journal titles and access to custom technical database collections, which are often searched or accessed as part of ongoing laboratory operations. The corporate librarian must work with representatives from vendors such as ACS, Elsevier, and Thomson Reuters and manage the organization's subscriptions; set up training, so that users know how to use library resources; and be able to answer questions about these resources. In effect, the corporate librarian must be a knowledgeable user of these technologies, not just an administrator. Library staff needs to stay current on the latest research tools and be able to locate and/or suggest appropriate resources for their scientists.

The library must continually think about the end result, which is how different resources can help scientists with their work. An example of a search request from a chemist might be to conduct a literature search on a particular compound to identify as much information as possible in order for that scientist to efficiently run an experiment. Databases such as SciFinder allow users to search not only by structure or reaction type, but also by keyword to identify literature, including global patents. Once the literature search is complete, library staff are then able to track down articles for the scientist.

It is important for the library to remain in contact with the scientists in the lab to know their information needs. Setting up reference hours, attending departmental meetings, and having a library advisory committee made up of representatives from various scientific departments are all ways to keep open communication between the corporate library and scientists. Reference hours allow scientists the opportunity to meet with library staff to discuss research needs and learn more about library services. Attending departmental meetings gives the corporate librarian a view of the issues facing the scientists in their work. An advisory committee can help with budget planning and make other employees aware of changes to library subscriptions and services.

Gathering Competitive Intelligence

Another user group would be a business development or sales department in need of competitive intelligence and market data. Companies need to monitor competitive developments, and this can be done by tracking public information, including annual reports, scientific publications, white papers, regulatory filings, and press releases.[2] Similarly, it is important to track opportunities and be abreast of developments with existing or potential partners or customers.

Today's librarians are trained researchers, who have been trained to shift through information on the internet, performing complex searches on custom databases using keywords and other search methods, and be able to access and track highly complex and a growing primary literature database. These skills are all requirements of performing competent competitive intelligence analysis.

The following scenario is one way that a corporate library can support business development. An executive approaches the corporate library in need of background research on a relatively unknown company that is located outside the United States. The executive is hoping to find out more about the company; particularly what risks would be involved in entering into a long term agreement with the company. The library meets with the executive to discuss search strategies and focus on what type of information is needed. This meeting results in identifying important questions to base the search around including, in this case, if this private company will make a reliable partner and if it is a viable business.

Based on these discussions, the library is able to develop key terms to search including the name of the company, its chief executive, other officers or key employees as well as the drug candidate(s) of specific interest. In searching for available public information, a database news search is completed using all the relevant terms. In this example, several reports were identified and obtained, including a company risk profile, through the Securities and Investment Commission's website for the country where the company is located.

A legal search was also performed to find possible court cases involving the company of interest. Patents issued to the company were located using the European Patent Office's (EPO) website and the potential market size was estimated using several different commercial databases. The library was able to collect the information in a short amount of time and deliver a report to the executive. As a result, the executive was better prepared for subsequent negotiations and the company was able to achieve an optimal outcome in this situation because of the new information from these searches.

Similar search strategies can be developed and executed any time the business has questions about a potential company or contract. It is important for the library to develop a general process for executing these types of searches to better serve the organization and create maximum efficiency. Similar to dealing with scientific departments, the corporate librarian must be aware of issues facing the business and identify appropriate resources that could be tapped into. The corporate librarian should periodically examine the organization's subscriptions versus the universe of new and previously available publications and think about which user groups can benefit from different approaches.

The Intersection of Science and Business in Library Research

One area where scientific and business information intersects is patents.[4] Monitoring patent activity is a useful way of keeping track of developments in intellectual property and understanding market potential before or even during the time an organization makes investment decisions.[5] It also aids scientists with their job function in the lab. The library should develop search strategies for retrieving patent information and stay informed of the strengths and features of the available patent databases (most are available to search and download patents for free). The corporate librarian should understand the structure of the patent document and be able to locate information within different sections.[5]

Library staff need to be experts on completing patent searches, which can help multiple departments across an organization from scientific to sales to a variety of business functions. An example of a patent search request could be a need to find the manufacturing process for a specific compound. The organization is pursuing marketing in the United States and wants to see what other companies have filed. The corporate librarian narrows down a SciFinder keyword search to specifically pull out patent documents and compares this information to a search on the European Patent Office's (EPO) website. An expert from Nerac, a research and advisory firm, can also be consulted to make sure no information is left out of the patent search. The information is delivered to the manager so that his department can proceed with their work.

Complete patent and publication searches are also important for assuring that organizations have a total view of the IP surrounding a specific area of interest. This could be to determine a competitor's IP position (or lack thereof), or to assist in the "freedom to operate" IP assessment. An example of this would be to provide data to help assess if a new or modified manufacturing process possibly violates someone else's intellectual property. By searching direct and related topics and providing results to the project team, the library helps the team fill in the holes in literature searches performed by others.

In summary, creating a tailored approach to library services by identifying the different user groups and thinking about their information needs will help transform the corporate library from a repository into an information center. Outcome evaluation is an important measure to identify library user groups and determine what resources will benefit those groups to help the organization thrive in a competitive market. This type of evaluation moves away from the traditional view of the library as an isolated and separate entity, allowing it to align with the goals of the whole organization.

The library's research expertise, whether helping complete a literature search, finding competitive intelligence, or looking for patent information, can help turn projects around quicker as opposed to having scientists and business development managers spend hours or even days searching for information. A stronger internal research process, which includes finding accurate, in-depth information, will ultimately help drive intelligent scientific- and business-driven decisions.

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