TRANSCRIPT

The Thought Leader's Viewpoint Episode 2

(Introduction) Governors State University School of Extended Learning presents The Thought Leader's Viewpoint.

Felicia Townsend: I'm Felicia Townsend from Governors State University School of Extended Learning. I am here today with Lydia Morrow Ruetten the dean of the library at Governors State University. Today we are going to discuss university libraries as resources for student success.

Lydia, thank you for joining me today.

Lydia Morrow Ruetten: Thank you, Felicia. It's my pleasure.

Felicia: There are many factors that contribute to a student's success, what impact do libraries have on student retention and graduation rates at their respective institutions?

Lydia: There are actually studies that support a direct link between how much the students uses the library, the number of books they check out or borrow from other institutions, and the number of times that they log into the library catalogue to retrieve journal articles. There's a direct impact with their retention and graduation rates. For anyone out there in the library field, there's also a correlation between the library materials, budget, collections size, and circulation that links back to the student retention and graduation rates.

The library is a part of the overall academic package. The library has the same high impact practices as the other units. We, of course, want to build a relationship between the librarian, the library staff, our students, our community users and whoever is here. We want to be a part of their classroom instruction. We want to offer them real world job experiences here within the library with increasing responsibilities and also provide the mentoring and expectations that go with the job.

We also want to collaborate with our students on projects. We've had students who have done internships and practicums. We've also had library school students who have come in to get a variety of experiences that they probably didn't have in the real world to supplement their resumes and to make them a little more valuable as they start seeking their job after they receive their degrees.

Felicia: In what ways can university libraries collaborate with internal units and external organizations to ensure that students are receiving the resources and services to be successful inside and outside the classroom?

Lydia: Well all university libraries are well positioned to work with their academic units. In every model that I've ever seen, the librarians are given liaison responsibilities to the division, the department, the program or whatever it may be. Our librarians here at Governors State are academically prepared and every one of them has at least two master's degrees. One of our individuals has multiple PhDs. So our librarians work very closely with the faculty members in those programs. They work very closely with their students. The libraries supports the types of materials that they need to support their course, whether it be books, videos, tests, and models for some of our PT people. We're just there to provide anything that the student needs. I always tell students as I

meet them coming into the university for the first time that it's probably one of the best investments they can ever make and it's free to meet their librarian who's responsible with their program so they can help them throughout their studies.

All of the services that the library provides, we can work with any units inside the library whether they're academic or support services. Let's say career services for instance, we have a number of materials that support the different careers and what's hot and what's not and what the government thinks the forecast is. We have electronic resources on our database. If they're having programs for the international studies group and they're taking a trip to India or another country, we can provide materials to them about what the government is saying about travel and art. We also have a collection of culinary books that covers the ethnicity of different cultures and what to expect when you visit those countries.

Felicia: Tell me about the work that you do with external organizations to ensure that students are receiving the resources and services for their work outside the classroom?

Lydia: Felicia I consider all of our public libraries community partners. If we don't have what the student needs, we know or have a pretty good idea of where to refer our users to get the information that they need. Usually they have what we don't have and we have what they don't have. So we have partnered with our external organizations in a number of ways. Fairly recently we obtained a grant called the Big Read. All of us came together to read Fahrenheit 451 together. This was in conjunction with the Center for Performing Arts, which also had a performance of Fahrenheit 451. The intellectual life committee had a viewing of the movie followed by a discussion, which was hugely attended by many of our outside community users and some of the organizations like the Knowledge Exchange that's very active here on this campus.

Felicia: Yes and that's a part of the School of Extended Learning.

Lydia: Yes it is. There are other opportunities that we share intellectual pursuits with. We partner for the good of the community such as recycling, friendraising and fundraising. Many times we create partnerships with these local organizations to house their historical records or to work jointly with an area to maintain the history of the community or even share the stories that are built around our communities.

All libraries have programs for the community members whether it's a story hour for the young people, travel program, book clubs, author book talks, movie nights, games nights. They also have art displays, hands on workshops, demonstrations, craft, cooking demonstrations and so much more.

Felicia: Wow.

Lydia: Anybody that's listening that's ever had a suggestion for a program, I would encourage them to not hesitate to make a suggestion. If you're interested in it then probably someone else is to.

Felicia: When you started working in libraries over thirty years ago there were no cellphones to send text messages and there was no internet to search for information. Now you have the World Wide Web, over one hundred social media networking sites and various mediums to transmit and retrieve information. What are some of the creative ways that university libraries use technology as a means to build awareness among students and other internal constituents about the resources and services they offer?

Lydia: You hit the nail on the head and you're really telling people my age Felicia.

Felicia: (Laugh)

Lydia: Electronic access to information has really changed the way libraries work. It brings about so much more information to the user than it ever has. But the researcher now especially needs to be more savvy than ever to be able to sift through all the information they receive as a result of a search. So it's even more important than ever for our users to know our librarians or their library staff member to be able to determine what information is good and what information is not.

So one of the hot topics right now is fake news. People need to gain those skills and where to look. Check the source, consider the source, and read beyond that information. Are their supporting sources? Check the date. Check the author. Ask the experts. If they want to make sure a story is right, learn those skills, talk to the library staff and they will help you determine what's fake and what's not.

In terms of social media, I feel like I've grown up in the social media age. There are various apps for different databases. There's a lot of sharing through the various social media tools over that one hundred that you said there really are. So libraries really try to reach our users where they are in terms of the social media, the electronics. We try to make sure that we have ways that they can access those materials and the tools that they need in order to do so.

Felicia: Where do you think university libraries are going in the future?

Lydia: Well I think they are going to continue to be what they've been. It's a place to study. A place to reflect and learn. Libraries now offer different types of spaces and different types of furniture and lots of places to collaborate. One of the words that's very popular is that it's a collaboratorium. We have things that you can't get elsewhere. So there are things that we can get from other institutions, from around the country, from around the world, around the nation, or down the street.

Felicia: You have worked in different library roles for twenty-eight years at Governors State University. What inspires you to continue your work in the library profession?

Lydia: I've seen a lot of changes and continue to see more everyday. One thing that has remained constant is the desire to help our students and community users. Anybody in the library profession loves to help. They love to assist and we're always looking for new ways to bring in new technology, be more efficient, faster and cost effective to deliver the multitudes of information.

Felicia: Wow. Lydia thank you so much for sharing your insights.

(Closing) If you want to learn more about the School of Extended Learning, please visit govst.edu/oce that's govst.edu/oce.

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