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## **International trainees pick up challenges and win**

**Two German trainees worked at Turku University of Applied Sciences Library in autumn 2013. They worked at customer service and held Nelli info sessions for TUAS international students. Their experiences as trainees and the experience of the host library were quite encouraging.**

## **Internationalisation at home**

Erna Schweizer and Christine Matthies are students of the programme in Library and Information Management from Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW). In autumn 2013, they came to Turku, Finland, for a three-month student exchange in the Degree Programme in Library and Information Services at Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS). In addition to their studies, they both completed a practical training of 180 hours.

TUAS Degree Programme in Library and Information Services contacted TUAS Library about taking international students as trainees. Although we thought that foreign students would be a challenge for the library, we also felt that there was something to be gained from this experience. Having trainees means extra workforce for the library, but, naturally, it also means that there must be someone to guide them. Giving trainees only the easiest chores is a solution to minimise the need for guidance, but it is not that motivating from the trainees' point of view.

We decided that we would trust the trainees with real responsibilities as soon as possible. They had their own customer service shifts at the library service desk. This was advertised for our customers as an "opportunity to internationalise at home". The regular library staff were always close by, so, in problematic situations, they could step in. According to our observations, only a handful of people were so intimidated by the service in English that a regular library worker had to be called in. Some customers were very happy to speak German.

## **Presenting the Nelli portal to international students**

Another task involved planning, marketing and carrying out Nelli presentations, which were aimed at TUAS international students. International students are often on the margin when it comes to teaching information literacy. We hoped that presentations on electronic resources held in English by exchange students would interest the international student community, and that they would have better opportunities to market their presentations by word of mouth than the regular library staff.

Erna and Christine were especially impressed by the MySpace (OmaNelli) functionality of the Nelli portal, so they decided to highlight it in their presentations. Also, they thought that Nelli is quite easy to use (!) and thus very helpful to students. In addition to showing the basic search functions and the MySpace functionality, they presented briefly MOT Dictionaries and the newspaper database PressDisplay, both of which they felt to be very useful to international students. For example, they recommended the MOT Proofing proofreading functionality for written assignments.

TUAS Library has six campus libraries; four in Turku, one in Salo and one in Loimaa. We thought that it would be good training for Erna and Christine to give their presentation more than once, so we planned a Nelli tour of the four library units in Turku. Of course, we would also get the most out of them by having them repeat their presentation. The trainees tell about their marketing plan: “One option to market e-resources is to use social media. In order to promote our Nelli presentation and to get the students’ attention, we chose to create a Facebook event on the Facebook page of TUAS Library. There, we provided information about what, when and where we were going to give our presentations. We also sent an email to exchange students and informed them about the Facebook event. In addition to the Facebook event, we used flyers, which we handed out in the cafeteria of Sepänkatu, and hung posters to promote our presentation in certain places of the Sepänkatu campus, such as at the library and in front of the international coordinator’s office.”

Despite the marketing efforts, there was very little audience in the presentations. It was a pity because Erna and Christine did a good job – they had planned their presentation thoroughly, they had well-formulated slides, and their overall performance was good. Our expectation that student presenters would attract more audience than our regular staff was not fulfilled. The usual notion of these database marketing events is that they are poorly attended unless the target audience is already present at the venue for some other reasons.

And, this seems to be true in any case. We will have to take this into account when planning our future information sessions.

### **DBIS is the Nelli portal in Hamburg**

Since marketing electronic resources is often challenging, and since not everyone feels that Nelli is easy to use, it was interesting to ask our trainees about how these things are done at their home institution, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences. The trainees said that “New students of HAW get a brief introduction to the library and e-resource services of the institution in the very first days of their studies. Usually, there is a short presentation of about 30 minutes by a librarian to show how to use the library, how to find the right literature with the help of the library catalogue and how the database portal DBIS (Datenbank-Infosystem) works. Sometimes, there is also a guided tour through the branch libraries of the department.” As students of the programme in Library and Information Management, Erna and Christine had themselves received a much more thorough training in information systems.

“The database portal we use at our home institution, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, is called DBIS. DBIS contains scientific databases and can be used by all students of HAW. The portal uses a traffic light system to categorise its databases because there are resources that are accessible for everybody, some that are only available for HAW students, and some that can only be used after a special login. Searches for databases can be done by free text, by name, by subject, by region, by type or by license. DBIS itself does not offer e-books or e-journals directly, only databases that contain those. So, if you compare Nelli and DBIS, the main search function for databases is the same. Students can use both portals to do searches by name or by subject. Nevertheless, there are certain differences: students can log in to Nelli and use its really handy function of MySpace and find e-books and e-journals directly in the portal. DBIS however does not offer these e-resources immediately, but, with the help of the traffic light system, you can find free databases and databases that you need to log in to. ”

A quick look at DBIS shows that the vast majority of databases offered there are free on the Internet. Among the databases licensed by HAW are Academic Search Elite and IngentaConnect. A German speciality is licenses that can be applied for by all people living

in Germany. For example, EBSCOhost eBook Collection is available without charge within Germany: “**Einzelpersonen** mit ständigem Wohnsitz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland können sich persönlich für einen kostenlosen Zugriff **registrieren** lassen“. This makes HAW’s DBIS system very different from TUAS’ Nelli portal, which we have designed to be a licensed database platform for our students and staff.

### **So, how was it?**

Erna and Christine were the first exchange student trainees that we have had at our library. This initial experience was quite good for the library, although, now that we know a bit more about what to expect, there are things that could be done better. One important point was that it paid off to trust the trainees with real responsibilities. Erna and Christine comment on their practical training: “All in all, we enjoyed the practical training and gained a lot of interesting experiences while working on the Nelli project. Unfortunately, not many students attended our presentations, but, either way, we learned a lot about databases and how to present them to other persons. Promoting and marketing the Nelli portal was a new and exciting task for us. It was interesting to see how other institutions offer e-resources to their students. Now, we are leaving Finland with our new earned knowledge and skills. We are happy that TUAS offered us the opportunity to get to know the work in a Finnish library.“

Pauliina Isomäki, information specialist, Linnankatu campus library, Turku University of Applied Sciences

The article is based on a text written by the trainees Erna Schweizer and Christine Matthies (library and information management students, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences).

<http://www.haw-hamburg.de/>

[http://rzblx10.uni-regensburg.de/dbinfo/dbliste.php?bib\\_id=hawhh&colors=63&ocolors=40&lett=f&gebiete=28](http://rzblx10.uni-regensburg.de/dbinfo/dbliste.php?bib_id=hawhh&colors=63&ocolors=40&lett=f&gebiete=28)