City University of New York (CUNY)
CUNY Academic Works

Publications and Research | Baruch College

2015

Crowdsourcing as an Approach to Customer Relationship Building in Academic Libraries

Lisa A. Ellis
CUNY Bernard M Baruch College

Aisha Pena
CUNY Bernard M Baruch College

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/bb_pubs/1116
Discover additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).
Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

Teaching New Students: Crowdsourcing as an Approach to Customer Relationship Building in Academic Libraries

Library initiatives to first-year students not only present an opportunity to offer information literacy instruction for student advancement but they also serve a key marketing function by communicating the library's ongoing value and building customer relationships. Library orientation tours are an example of how to effectively market to first-year students. Combining peer-to-peer learning and user-generated content via social media known as crowdsourcing, Newman Library sponsored a contest challenging first-year students to create a video sharing a useful library tip. The contributions and benefits of this co-creation approach to fostering relationships are examined and the implications to strengthening other library-user bonds are explored.

KEYWORDS Crowdsourcing, Peer-to-Peer Learning, First-Year Experience, Customer Relationship, Marketing, Contests

Defining Crowdsourcing and Its Relational aspects

As a term, crowdsourcing was originally coined by Jeff Howe in *Wired* as "everyday people using their spare cycles to create content, solve problems, even do corporate R & D" (2006, n.p.). It is likely Howe was exploring the enterprising implications of ideas presented in Surowiecki's 2004 book, *The Wisdom of Crowd.* As Surowiecki stated, "[A]sk a hundred people to answer a question or solve a problem, and the average answer will often be at least as good as the answer of the smartest member" (2004, 11). By drawing upon the masses online to create something or offer an idea in accordance with a request, organizations are able to take advantage of *collective intelligence*, a term best defined in laymen's terms as the "ability to pool knowledge of millions (if not billions) of users in a self-organizing fashion demonstrates how mass collaboration is turning the new Web into something not completely unlike a global brain" (Tapscott and Williams 2008, 41). Moving beyond the notion of the self-directed masses, it is Brabham's definition that describes, in part, the bidirectonial relationship of the crowdsourcing process as, "a shared process of bottom-up, open creation by the crowd and top-down management by those charged with serving an organization's strategic interests" (2013, xxi). In fact, his definition succinctly articulates the online exchange between the crowdsourcer and the crowds, especially in relation to a contest or competition, that seems to support how crowdsourcing could be "a successful tool for marketing and PR purposes, market research, developing, testing and launching new products" (Chwialkowska 2012, 22). Nonetheless, it is the lengthy integrated definition of crowdsourcing devised by Estellés-Arolas and González-

Ladrón-de-Guevara that we prefer since it encompasses relational aspects of the give and take dynamic which is worthwhile to present here in full:

> Crowdsourcing is a type of participative online activity in which an individual, an institution, a non-profit organization, or company proposes to a group of individuals of varying knowledge, heterogeneity, and number, via a flexible open call, the voluntary undertaking of a task. The undertaking of the task, of variable complexity and modularity, and in which the crowd should participate bringing their work, money, knowledge and/or experience, always entails mutual benefit. The user will receive the satisfaction of a given type of need, be it economic, social recognition, self-esteem, or the development of individual skills, while the crowdsourcer will obtain and utilize to their advantage what the user has brought to the venture, whose form will depend on the type of activity undertaken (2012, 197).

In his case study on Threadless, an online t-shirt company, Brabham (2010) examined how the company used crowdsourcing to great, if not ongoing success in creating a community of designers/consumers from its monthly design competitions. In a series of interviews, involving the designers/consumers, the four motivational reasons for participating emerged as, "the opportunity to make money, the opportunity to develop one's creative skills, the potential to take up freelance work, and the love of community at Threadless"(1124). This case study makes it apparent that crowdsourcing entails an exchange where individuals contribute their knowledge, skills, and creativity for the return of tangible (e.g., prizes, money, etc.) or intangible (e.g., social recognition, development of skills, etc.) benefits. Among the four dominant crowdsourcing types or categories studied by Brabham (2012), the peer-vetted creative production approach is exemplified by Threadless as well as by our own, *Sharing My Newman Library*. In this approach, an organization calls upon the crowd to submit creations, and then select among the creations by voting on the superlative submissions to "simultaneously identify the best ideas and collapse the market research process into an

instance of firm-consumer co-creation…[which is] appropriate, then, for problem solving concerning matters of taste and user preference, such as aesthetic and design problems" (Brabham 2012, 125). For the purposes of this article we will be making use of the term "consumer" instead of "customer" to refer to first-year students and other library users in a business sense since there is no monetary exchange for the use of library resources, services and facilities. We acknowledge some of the literature cited may use the term "customer", especially as part of compound marketing terms as "customer relationship" and variants of this term. Nonetheless, "customer" should be regarded as interchangeable with "consumer".

Despite being grouped in the same category as Threadless, *Sharing My Newman Library* is distinct by specifically employing the crowdsource approach for a sponsored contest to create user-generated advertising or promotion. The benefits to the crowdsourcer are succinctly stated as, "draw[ing] persuasive messages from the very audience one is trying to persuade is an ultimate form of marketing research. In theory, customers know what they want, and in practice, the goal with crowdsourced advertising is to get customers to produce it in the first place" (Brabham 2009, n.p.). Another unique consideration to the Newman Library contest that we will examine is the use of peer leaders as intermediaries in customer relationship building between librarians and first-year students. Since librarians are likely from different generations than first-year students, it becomes important for them to attempt to enlist the help of peer leaders to gain insight into first-year student interests and preferences to better understand this target market. Being relatively seasoned members of the Baruch College, peer leaders enjoy a status and position in the community that new students aspire to belong and thus, are influential. Formulating an understanding of the peer leader - first-year

student relationship, academic libraries may not only consider developing future co-creation endeavors involving other new student groups, but also impact student advancement on many levels.

Since library orientation tours focused on making Millennials or first-year students feel positive and at ease with the library through engagement/connection with librarians and peer leaders, it seems ideal for libraries to incorporate social and fun-filled aspects into these tours. Yet, this does not mean that instructional components, which are considered the more serious pursuits of libraries, should not be featured or integrated into a crowdsourcing contest. By partnering with peer leaders to promote peer-to-peer learning in a light-hearted and low-stakes way, Newman Library has helped these first-year students gain an understanding of the systems at work in the library and how it can be a hub of student life. In the end, it is partnerships among stakeholders in the college community (librarians, peer leaders, faculty and college administrators) which strengthen the institutional commitment to the core goals for student advancement: engagement, connection, retention, academic success, and self-actualization. Figure 1 illustrates how institutional stakeholders are united in their commitment to the core goals for student advancement from engagement/connection with college freshmen to promoting self-actualization in graduating seniors.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Millennials as Participants in the Crowd

With the Internet and search engines like Google used daily by many students and faculty, today's academic libraries are increasingly challenged to stay relevant and offer services, resources, and facilities that are valued by users. For those libraries that are fortunate to have the technology infrastructure to enable users to seamlessly move from the library's website to the Internet and back again, users are afforded the opportunity to share and commune with their network of family, friends, and acquaintances through such social media as *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram,* and *YouTube*. As more sophisticated digital users reach college age, they will not just gravitate to using wireless networks but they will also seek to be hyperconnected, with many devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops simultaneously on hand (Anderson and Rainie 2012, 1).

Typically, college age students are categorized as either Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000) or beyond (now, Generation Z, born between mid or late 1990s or from the mid 2000s to the present day). For the purposes of this article, we will focus on Millennials who are accustomed to multitasking with multiple windows open and devices on hand, including mobile ones. Pew Center Research reveals that technology Is what makes Millennials unique with 75% having a profile on a social networking site and 83% having their smartphones (with 77% owning such devices) on or right next to their beds while sleeping (Taylor and Keeter 2010, 2, 7; Zickuhr and Rainie 2014, n.p.). Whether these students multitask to lesser or greater benefits, they will most likely seek to do so and stay connected to their communities as digital natives. While Millennials use a variety of technology devices in their lives, often they are reliant on

their peers, through word-of-mouth and sharing, to learn how to apply these to their school and work lives in new and innovative ways. It is through these collective and participatory engagements with a community of their peers that they acquire and hone skills and knowledge.

As marketers have harnessed the power of social media and interactive marketing campaigns to draw consumers to the products and services of businesses, academic libraries and educational institutions are becoming just as savvy about developing marketing strategies to reach their user communities, especially new students. New students can be viewed as an ideal target market since they represent new consumers who are reliant on the college community, especially existing students to learn and discover the value of the library and its offerings. Crowdsourcing, a participatory process for obtaining user-generated content via social media, has been successfully used by libraries to develop collaborative content, innovations and marketing strategies. As a crowd, new students like first-year students represent a heterogeneous group of individuals who do not know each other well and may be shaped by a unique knowledge base. However, they still share similar characteristics as part of the millennial generation. Aside from understanding the crowdsourcing process, the relational benefits and contributions attained by both the crowdsourcer and the crowd, have seldom been discussed. Consequently, the idea of using crowdsourcing as an approach to build customer relationships between academic libraries and students is worth examining in greater depth.

The Establishment of Library Initiatives to First-Year Students

With the adoption of *Information Literacy Competency Standards in Higher Education* in 2000, academic libraries have worked in partnership with colleges and universities to develop pedagogical initiatives to reach students (2000). One of the most prevalent programs created in higher education to date focused on the retention of first-year undergraduate students in what became known as first-year experience (FYE) programs (ACRL 2004). Many academic libraries, eager to implement far-reaching information literacy initiatives, formed meaningful collaborations with these FYE programs. Aside from teaching students the information abilities needed for student advancement, other library initiatives such as orientation tours communicated the ongoing value of the library, its resources, and services. In many ways, these orientation tours served an important marketing function in making new students aware of the value of the academic library in their lives.

At the center of communicating a marketing message, librarians also took responsibility for portraying a positive image to new students and debunking misconceptions about their roles in higher education. The image of librarians as approachable and resourceful is just as essential to communicate to students, as it is to convey a sense of the library as fun and inviting. In fact, there is much in the literature to suggest how these positive attributes of librarians translate into increased learning and feelings of satisfaction (Pagowsky and DeFrain blog, as cited in Bartlett 2014, 1). Considering the persistent stereotypes of librarians as "unfriendly" and "cold", librarians made more of a concerted effort to "project a sense of 'warmth' [since this] tend[s] to foster improved student learning…" (Ibid). While the emphasis

on student perceptions of librarians may be regarded as insignificant, from a marketing perspective, it determines how receptive students may be to the message communicated and also perhaps the librarian's ability to influence a desired behavior or outcome. (Kotler and Keller 2012)

Academic librarians were able to actively portray a friendly and supportive instructional role to new students by connecting to FYE programs. These programs catered to the needs of a specific group of new students who were just discovering what it means to be a member of the college community and the kinds of support and assistance available. Alongside counselors and peer tutors, librarians served as part of a supportive network, each playing a role in helping first-year students cope with the demands of college life and acculturate into the community. Understandably, these students may be overwhelmed adjusting to a new environment and making new friends. Librarians can help these students reduce feelings of anxiety that may be impediments to learning by engaging them in ways that are thought of as entertaining and light-hearted. Although these students are most likely to forget some of the finer points about the information presented to them, in the very least, they will obtain a favorable first impression of librarians as friendly and helpful (Collins and Dodsworth 2011, 2). Depending on how librarians effectively plan to reach these new students, the first impression can be memorable and have the potential impact to leave a lasting impression.

Over the years, Newman Library's participation in the FYE had taken many iterations, including orientation tours to all sections of the Freshmen Orientation seminar (FRO), course-integrated lectures to all sections of a freshmen English course (FRE), and library credit courses

as part of learning communities or a block of courses assigned to the same cohort of first-year students. Each offering specifically communicated a message consisting of goals and objectives. This series of inter-related messages presented the library with an opportunity to reach the target audience on multiple occasions for greater recognition and impact. Figure 2 illustrates the Newman Library's initiatives in relation to Baruch College's FYE programs.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

Building Partnerships in the First-Year Experience

Pairing up with FYE programs, librarians established strategic alliances with FYE faculty who saw the benefits of reaching a captured audience of first-year students. Since faculty exert influence over students in their classes, they are strong marketing communicators especially for word-of-mouth marketing. In order to create a word-of-mouth promotion or "buzz", marketers enlist the help of those whose opinions matter enough to consumers about a particular product or service, such as information resources or library services, so that talking about such a product or service will persuade consumption (Kotler and Keller 2012, 478). In this manner, faculty could serve as intermediaries connecting librarians to first-year students and even, reinforcing a connection already established through typical one-shot engagements like library tours or course-integrated lectures.

While these partnerships may have had some influence on new students, many librarians sought out peer leaders in FYE who were most instrumental as intermediaries in forming cohesive relations with first-year students. Peer leaders were assigned by the college

to each section of FRO which was taught by faculty. They assisted faculty with the curriculum and primarily served as mentors and advisors to first-year students. Peer mentoring is a form of peer-assisted learning (PAL) which is defined as "people from similar social groupings, who are not professional teachers, helping each other to learn and by doing so, learning themselves" (Topping and Ehly 1998, 1). Peer mentors display such traits as "nurturing, serving as a role model, teaching, encouraging, and counseling" (Bodemer 2014, 164). Seeking mutually beneficial relations overall, first-year students held peer leaders in high esteem. They respected and admired these upper classmen who served as mentors while also being receptive to listening and taking heed to their advice. Peer leaders regarded first-year students as mentees and felt a sense of responsibility, care, and nurturance toward these younger classmen, especially in helping with their successful acculturation into the college community for greater retention.

Part of the basis of this peer relationship is grounded on shared generational affinities for technology and communication. Both groups are active users of mobile devices and social media where they may likely be connected to each other. Over time, first-year students begin to trust peer leaders, valuing their suggestions and point of views which is further strengthened over time through the increasing frequency of engagement. According to Matthew, "peer support and recommendations largely factor into decision making and can shape lasting impressions [of the library]" (2009, 69). He defined "Affiliates" as groups of students, such as resident assistants, teaching assistants, and tutors, who work directly with other students. They represent potential partners of the library, and, as such, they are akin to peer leaders (78). Since they possess helping roles like librarians, these peer leaders appreciated learning and

being informed about various library resources and services. They often freely shared this information with their student groups through favorable word-of-mouth. This kind of relationship marketing emphasizes "close and frequent contact in order to communicate an ongoing value to customers" (Dillon as cited in Thorpe and Bowman 2013, 103).

The Purpose and History of Library Orientation Tours at Newman Library

Orientation tours to first-year students were intended to give a positive first impression about the ever-present value and relevancy of the library. The orientations tours represented a key component in the library's overall message of being a supportive, welcoming, and vital place whether visited in-person or remotely. In order to effectively communicate the message, it is important to state both goals ("mission") and objectives in what may be defined as the "marketing strategy". Based on the marketing strategy, an integrated marketing mix is devised or "a framework for implementation of [the] marketing strategy in any organization, and planning the goals and aims" (Kotler and Armstrong 2012, 48; Soroya and Ameen 2013, 6). Collins and Dodsworth's (2011) orientation session to first-year students at the University of Waterloo had the goals: "To spark students' interest and encourage greater comfort and familiarity with the library…" From these goals, the objectives "aim to: 1) create clear and concise messaging for delivering essential information; 2) demonstrate how the library will fit into students' lives; and 3) deliver content in a high-energy and upbeat way"(3). Since it is important to appreciate the comprehensiveness of the marketing strategy and marketing mix developed by the library for all three initiatives to first-year students, Appendix 1 gives an

overview of the goals, objectives, and implementation (or "how achieved") for the First-Year Newman Library – Baruch College Initiatives (See Appendix 1).

Evolving over time, the orientation tours changed from being librarian-directed lecture formats with little to no interaction to more student-driven participatory formats appealing to a tech-savvy generation. Initially, orientations were physical tours presenting the various service points (circulation, reference, and periodicals) in the library which often did not convey a common message. Sometimes these tours were led by peer leaders assigned to the FRO seminar who were informally trained by librarians; they tended to lack a uniform script or message. This was the same issue for librarians, each of whom independently gave their own overview of the library with varying emphasis. At the time, such a dilettante approach revealed our ignorance of the importance of conveying a uniform message for effective marketing.

Striving for improvement, a self-directed tour and quiz for FRO was created. In this version, students toured the library on their own or with other students, stopping at designated service desks to gather one-page handouts giving relevant information about each service desk. The last handout required students go to the library's website to chat online with a librarian to receive a link to a webpage. In the end, students were required to take a quiz based on the handouts that were posted in their Blackboard accounts under FRO. Since the quiz could be readily graded in Blackboard, students were encouraged to take it multiple times to achieve a grade of 80% or better. Evidently, this self-directed tour was a vast improvement from our first efforts in establishing a uniform message, given the use of handouts. In addition, the quiz served as a form of learning outcomes assessment for the orientation, although it could hardly

be viewed as any "true" form of assessment since students were able to take the quiz multiple times for a desired outcome. However, since students could refer to the handouts while they took the quiz, comparable to an open-book test, this online quiz added a fun-filled dimension intended to enhance positive attitudes toward the library. We also observed that these students often worked collaboratively in groups since they were taking the same group of courses in learning communities and seemed to have a comfortable familiarity with one another. Although these handouts were designed for the self-directed tour for first-year students, they were unexpectedly used by other groups of new students (i.e., transfer) seeking an explanation of services available at a desk or general library orientation. Figure 3 shows the Circulation Desk handout from the self-directed library tour.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

***Sharing My Newman Library*: A Case Study**

By taking full advantage of the many aspects of marketing in the digital age where social media permits academic libraries to proactively and instructively engage students, the library decided to reach first-year students who were tech-savvy Millennials. The library was afforded access to these students through its association with FRO. While librarians did not communicate directly with first-year students, they were able to reach them through peer leaders whom they emailed and conversed with in-person. Crowdsourcing was an ideal approach to use since it has been used successfully for obtaining user-generated advertising via a contest (Brabham 2009). Further, crowdsourcing was selected since there was little to no

cost except for the *Dell* laptops awarded to contest winners. By sponsoring a contest to challenge first-year students to create a ninety-second video sharing a useful tip about the library, the Newman Library had the potential to receive invaluable promotions by and for the consumer, Baruch students.

The librarians worked with the college videographer and two peer leaders to create a video about a day in the life of two students who visit the library. This main video featuring the peer leaders and a brief promotional video were both mounted on the library's *YouTube* page and shared with students using persistent links. The following is a still image of the *YouTube* page (Figure 4) followed by persistent links to the main video and the promotional video:

[Insert Figure 4 here]

Main Video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dlhic0eOgcg

Promotional Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOODRLeVJ_w

The two peer leaders, enthusiastic upperclassmen who represented the rich diversity and talent among Baruch College students, volunteered their time to help create the video. Except for librarians featured at library service points as the reference desk, librarians were not featured prominently in the video and remained behind the scenes. They partnered with peer leaders to communicate to and reach students. The peer leaders distributed the details of the contest to students as a handout and they helped to field questions along the way. Since a handout can easily get lost or misplaced, the library decided to mount the contest details on its website. In

addition, a rubric titled, "Criteria for Creating and Assessing FRO Student Videos" was mounted on the library's website to help students gauge the quality and value of their completed videos and those of other first-year students using four criteria: originality and creativity, content, production quality, and time.

The contest, *Sharing My Newman Library,* encouraged students to work in pairs, watch the promotional video, and follow the four steps: (1) Explore the library and learn about its services, resources, and facilities; (2) Create a ninety-second video sharing a useful library tip; (3) Post the video to the *YouTube* group and complete the submission form; and (4) Share the video on the class blog, offer constructive criticism on other video submissions, and vote for the "Best Video."

For the first step, students came in groups to explore the library and they freely asked questions of library staff and librarians at service points. Since this occurred at about the sixth week of the semester, students experienced the library at a less stressful time when they would not be intensely involved in completing major course assignments. Requesting students to create a video in the second step may have been challenging since it required use of a video camera and, perhaps, knowledge of desktop publishing software, among many things. However, the first-year students were adept at using technology, with some even resorting to conveniently using their smartphones to create videos. The Library's Circulation division offered short-term loans of *Flip* cameras and *Macbooks* loaded with *Adobe* desktop publishing software, as part of the many technology offerings available to Baruch students on a regular basis. Many students made a concerted effort to review the rubric criteria, using it as a form of

self-assessment. In the third step, students posted their videos to *YouTube* by uploading the URL of their video to "FRO Library Videos" group. After tagging the video with the names of all team members, a contest submission form and required consents were completed online. In the final step, students were asked to engage in social media by blogging about their video at the course blog site. They reviewed other submissions and offered constructive criticism using the rubric criteria as a guide. Each course section of FRO was asked to vote on the "Best Video". Ultimately, the winning video was determined by taking into account the student votes and how well each video met the rubric criteria. The following are persistent links to a sampling of student video submissions to the contest:

Brief Library Tour

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ci0uA6OQAxQ&feature=related

Online Databases

https://youtu.be/OZ_uGHkhJfM

Copy Room

https://youtu.be/drpdRN-Hxc8

Relational Insights of *Sharing My Newman Library*

While first-year students may be familiar with digital devices, most are relatively unaware or unconcerned about privacy and copyright considerations. In the contest guidelines, students were advised to obtain permission by written consent from any person featured in their videos. When filming throughout various locations within the library, students were asked to be respectful of others and not be disruptive. Students were encouraged to freely share

their projects with interested students in the library and even invite these students to appear in their videos. According to peer leaders, some first-year students blogged about how they found it easier than they initially thought to engage with upperclassmen because their relationship with peer leaders made approaching upperclassmen less intimidating. (Freshmen Orientation (FRO) Blog Fall 2009). In fact, there was such a good response of curiosity in their projects that, more often than not, students were willing participants. This engagement not only helped first-year students make connections with other students in the college community, but it also helped them to develop self-confidence and social skills. For first-year students, "[t]his practice of community membership creation and collaboration can be seen as building a participatory culture" (Johnson et al. 2011, 5). First-year students established trust when they requested participants sign consents, but also demonstrated their maturity and professionalism. These actions showed how the students valued their work by maintaining a courteous and respectful demeanor. Since the library never received complaints from students or staff during the contest period, this was further testament to their high level of professionalism.

Unlike privacy, first-year students did have difficulty with managing issues related to copyright. Many students wanted to incorporate copyrighted contemporary music selections and images in their videos. Although contest guidelines provided relevant links to open access images and music, some students insisted on using lengthy selections of contemporary music. Rather than use a convenient work-around by looping a small selection from the entire song, one student defended their choice to contest organizers as innovative and effective marketing, claiming that they knew the music would attract students to watch the video and essentially

hear the message. For this student, the video represented their creative expression of the library as a lively place, thereby dispelling obsolete notions of the library as boring and uninviting. Unfortunately, while some videos were very creative, they had to be disqualified for copyright infringement. In order to increase knowledge of media literacy, librarians decided to teach aspects of intellectual property and media literacy in future course-integrated lectures to FRE.

First-year students represent new consumers who could offer a fresh perspective on library resources, services and facilities. One key goal of the contest was for peer leaders to prompt students to explore the library. According to peer leaders, some first-year students blogged about how they decided on what library tip to share. A number of students recounted how they wandered about the library, observing and taking note of the kinds of services, resources and activities students used or performed. One first-year student even blogged about the library as a "kind of hub of student life" that reminded them of the campus union at the college where their sibling attends. Another first-year student blogged about the insights and information presented by librarians during course-integrated lectures to FRE sections which they considered valuable enough to feature in a video (Freshmen Orientation (FRO) Peer Leaders February 9, 2010). Personally experiencing the library or getting up close to observe how other students engaged with the library, first-year students were afforded a unique opportunity to bear witness and decide for themselves what library resources, services or facilities should be valued by students.

For academic libraries, crowdsourcing combined with aspects of peer-to-peer learning served as an innovative way to teach new students or promote student learning through user-generated content. This combination facilitated relationships which helped shape the quality and caliber of their first-year college experience and even beyond. For example, Salter stated, "[c]rowdsourcing with clear feedback from both peers and the [librarians], constantly engages the students in the creation of their own educational experience and teaches skills about research and critical thinking" (2013, 363). Aside from the goals and objectives of the contest, the marketing message communicated had wide-ranging impact on the value of the library to the college community. According to Bodemer, "[m]any implementations of peer-learning are not solely targeted at achieving specific learning outcomes but simultaneously strive to enhance the overall university experience" (163). The college administration, collaborating with members of the college community, namely faculty, librarians and peer leaders, strives to ensure student advancement. By engaging students at the first semester through many channels, colleges and universities can begin to keep students academically and socially connected which has the potential to sustain them throughout the duration of their college careers.

Relational Dynamic of Peer-to-Peer Learning and Crowdsourcing in Academic Libraries

In a participatory culture where students act as both creators and consumers of content, peer learning is applied to the crowdsourcing model where user-generated content arises through a process of sharing among students (Clapp and Ewing 2013). There are rich interactions among students as they create and learn from each other which are greatly

facilitated by relationships within social media. Motivated by a number of reasons to participate in crowdsourcing activities, students derive value in both what is created and the skills developed. Depending on the crowdsourcing activities designed by libraries, students have the potential to develop an array of skills, including media and information literacies, as learning occurs, almost serendipitously, through their engagement in the process. For students, anxiety is lessened as they are engaged in the activity at hand which often has an element of fun (Forsyth 2012). Undoubtedly, crowdsourcing activities involving the library results in students having a favorable impression of the library and librarians as valued in the college experience.

Academic libraries may engage users by devising marketing initiatives like crowdsourcing that help to build relationships that communicate their value to the community. Since academic libraries have experienced increasing competition from the Internet, it is unrealistic to think users of any kind could be thought of as a captured audience. Suggesting an awareness of competition, Almquist notes, “If users are unaware of our offerings – or more importantly, the potential *value* provided by our offerings—they will not use them and our offerings may as well not exist” (2014, 46). Samuel Swett Green, a pioneer in librarianship, was the first to recommend librarians establish strong relationships with readers by "find[ing] out what books the actual users of the library need” which would then inform their collection development activities (1876, 78). In this manner and in accordance with today’s user-centered approach, “successful marketing creates a bidirectional process that includes the collection of information from users to determine their needs, which then guide the library as it develops and provides services” (Almquist 2014, 46).

Since first-year students provide content on their library needs through the *Sharing My Newman Library Contest*, the library does not have to collect market research to determine user needs like other traditional marketing initiatives. However, the relationships established through the Contest may be viewed as bidirectional involving both students and librarians, with peer leaders and faculty serving as intermediaries. From the point of view of benefits to the student, the student's input in the creation of instructional content has value and significance collectively as part of the library user community where content is intended to be shared among other library users. In this manner, students engage in peer-to-peer learning by creating content that appeals to their peers, and, further, presents the opportunity for greater customer satisfaction. From the point of view of benefits to the academic librarian, students make use of social media components like *YouTube* and blogs which draws them to the library's website from the Web. In this manner, customer loyalty is cultivated, as students becomes familiar with the library via the Web and develop an increased awareness of the library as a place to help them achieve student advancement. In fact, this increase in awareness of library offerings could be best understood as an increase in brand recognition where the crowdsourcing efforts of first-year students leads to their being regarded as brand ambassadors. As Chwialkowska aptly stated, "[C]rowdsourcing helps to create, maintain and strengthen the community around the brand and create a network of involved, committed people who will be the ambassadors of the brand or solution in the future" (2012, 28).

While the relational dynamic does not exclusively take place online since all stakeholders interacted with one another face-to-face in the classroom through other FYE initiatives, the online tour and the social media components helped to create a familiar

environment to first-year students (aka Millennials) where they could feel uninhibited and free to create. However, student creativity could be viewed as a direct response or reflection to the Main Video created by librarians, but prominently featuring peer leaders engaged with Baruch's Newman Library. This initial call-response dynamic was further propagated online as librarians later posted tutorials created using Captivate at the Library's *YouTube* channel which featured details about certain library offerings only cursorily featured in the Main Video. Conscious of student video submissions, librarians could begin to curate the channel with content they created as well as begin to think about ways to feature and organize the content created by students. Due to privacy guidelines, librarians only heard second-hand through conversations with peer leaders about the content of a small fraction of student blogs in FRO sections. For this reason, student blogs could be viewed as a realm of their own where students could offer constructive criticism and freely opine about the video contest submissions posted. In this way, it was not just the video submissions which mattered to the library, but the fact that this content was peer vetted by students who voted on superlative videos for each FRO section.

While the basis of the relationships established among the stakeholders was centered on the consumer or first-year students, each derived individual benefits from their participation which could be referred to as "motivations" (Chwialkowska, 2012, 27-28). We have decided to use the term "benefits" instead of "motivations" since it best characterizes the bidirectional dynamic where there is an exchange as contributions given lead to benefits received. The focus of our research may be on the relational dynamic between librarians and first-year students during a crowdsourcing initiative, but there is no denying its multi-dimensional complexity where other stakeholders contribute and benefit in the initiative too. It may be convenient to

generalize about the contributions and benefits of each stakeholder without also acknowledging there may be some unique aspects to the contributions given and benefits received by individuals. Nonetheless, the relational dynamic on a micro-cosmic level is more meaningful from a customer relationship building perspective when it is examined as part of an aggregate. In this manner, crowdsourcing does not just require participation from members of the community, but it is about building a sense of community where stakeholders are bound together and vested in the ongoing existence and vitality of the community. For first-year students who may initially think of themselves as just belonging to a class level of college freshmen, the idea of belonging to the larger college community may be an anxiety-ridden concept lacking the safety and insularity of being part of a specific group. Yet, it is through the formulation of relationships and engagements among librarians, peer leaders and faculty, individually or collaboratively, that first-year students begin to feel a connection to the larger college community. *Sharing My Newman Library* crowdsourcing contest represents a co-creation approach that reveals the contributions and benefits of all stakeholders of the community. Figure 5 below details the relational benefits not just to librarians and first-year students, but also to faculty and peer leaders who each served, to lesser or greater degree, respectively, as intermediaries.

[Insert Figure 5 here]

Future Implications of Crowdsourcing as a Co-Creation Approach to Relationship Building

Focusing the *Sharing My Newman Library* contest on first-year students, we were limited not only by the small number of first-year students in relation to the entire Baruch College undergraduate student body (approximately one-tenth), but also by the challenge of seeking voluntary as opposed to mandatory participation. Past Newman Library tours were always a requirement of the FRO seminar and the crowdsourcing initiative was initially conceived as such. However, we thought it was important to design an initiative comparable to a typical crowdsourcing contests with a prize, and seeking voluntary submissions from the most motivated and inspired first-year students. In retrospect, it is not likely first-year students would have felt their creative contributions would have been stifled simply because the crowdsourcing initiative was a required assignment. Further, it is not often students are given the choice to do or not do an assignment. In fact, this was the source of some confusion among faculty and peer leaders, some who presented the contest to students as voluntary, while others presented it as a requirement. While this significant misstep was costly in terms of the number of video submissions received (less than 20), we were still able to gain invaluable insights to the library on how to build customer relations with students using the co-creation approach of crowdsourcing combined with peer-to-peer learning.

Expanding the crowdsourcing initiative to all students or as a requirement of a specific library user-group, academic librarians have to decide on their primary objectives and how they might want to balance aspects of quantity and quality. Certainly, by targeting all students, academic libraries would have the potential to increase the quantity of submissions by

appealing to a larger pool of students, in hopes for obtaining superlative examples to feature on the Library's *YouTube* channel. On the other hand, focusing on a specific library user-group, like first-year students, academic libraries could employ crowdsourcing to cultivate relationships with particular members of the user community who may contribute and benefit in unique ways, including by learning of abilities needed in the use of library offerings for student advancement. Arguably, all library user-groups would stand to gain from customer relationship building by academic librarians, so that certain library offerings could be identified as needed by a specific group of users. Targeting a segment of the total library user audience is a more sensible marketing approach to customer relationship building as opposed to treating all users as an undifferentiated group with the same needs and interests (Kotler and Armstrong 2012, 16). Striving for a sustained connection to users, academic libraries would be better served by designing crowdsourcing initiatives where participation has meaning and matters to targeted user-groups.

Threadless is a good example of an organization that made optimal use of crowdsourcing to achieve sustained connection among stakeholders (the company and creators/consumers) comprised of a fully engaged community where the support for the creation, commentary on, and consumption of goods has meaning and matters (Brabham 2010). It is rare for organizations to find creators/consumers of goods or services in a manner which is more than a one-time occasion but self-sustaining as exemplified by Threadless. However, the accomplishments of Threadless are placed in a more realistic perspective when we consider the exploitive nature of this crowdsourcing model. As Brabham telling states, "compared to the profits Threadless makes on the sale of its crowd-made products…, the prize

money earned by winning designers is quite small" (2012, 127). Certainly, an organization being thought of as exploitive by consumers, would not be helpful to customer relationship building. On the other hand, designers may be able to reconcile participating in the creation of t-shirts not just for chance of earning prize money, but for other benefits they perceive may be equally if not, more important.

It is clear there are other types of crowdsourcing initiatives or even, co-creation processes besides peer-vetted created production like contests that academic libraries may want to consider for customer relationship building. Since crowdsourcing initiatives are still evolving with new approaches being introduced by organizations, it is important for academic libraries to consider freely designing new co-creation approaches for engaging consumers. Technology has especially enhanced the potential for online engagement with consumers in a participatory role that shapes their own brand experiences in ways that may be innovative. Academic libraries should "no longer look to create value solely within the library…instead, we will look outside and use our customer communities to help create that value" (Schachter 2013, 28).

Crowdsourcing is one of many kinds of engagement platforms that organizations can use to build customer relationships where the focus is on "continuous improvement, communication, and learning [to allow] customers and firms to 'win more-win more' by efficiently creating unique value" (Ramaswamy 2009, 12). For the Newman Library to harness the value of its brand as a destination library facility with professional expertise, friendly service, robust information resources and dependable technologies, it has to involve its users in

sharing their personal consumption/brand experiences. For example, organizations like Starbucks sought to engage customers and stakeholders in a dialogue about their offerings when they started MyStarbucksIdea.com in March 2008. Recounting the vision that Starbucks CEO, Howard Schultz had for this engagement platform, Ramaswamy describes how "he invited everyone and anyone to help co-shape the future of Starbucks with their ideas, in ways Starbucks might not have thought of, to check out other people's ideas, and vote on the ones they like best…the goal is to truly adopt customer ideas into Starbucks' business process, including product development, store design, and customer experience" (2009, 12-13). Such engagement platforms offer a measure of transparency and trust in the organization since ideas are posted online for the community to see and also participate in a dialogue with the company who in turn, decides to take action or not for stated reasons. As part of a college-wide community, academic libraries should seize the opportunity to work with other stakeholders such as peer leaders and faculty to involve students through online engagement platforms to co-create value in ways that have meaning and matters.

References

Almquist, Arne J. 2014. "The Innovative Academic Library: Implementing a marketing orientation to better address user needs and improve communication." *Journal of Library Innovation* 5(1):43-54.

Anderson, Janna, and Lee Rainie. 2012. Millennials will benefit and suffer due to their hyperconnected lives. In *The Future of the Internet*. Pew Research Center, February 29. http://www.pewinternet.org/files/old-media//Files/Reports/2012/PIP_Future_of_Internet_2012_Young_brains_PDF.pdf.

Bartlett, Jennifer A. 2014. "Coming to Terms with Librarian Stereotypes and Self-Image." *Library Leadership & Management* 29(1):1-5.

Bodemer, Brett B. 2014. "They CAN and they SHOULD: Undergraduates providing peer reference and instruction." *College & Research Libraries* 75:162-178. doi: 10.5860/crl12-411.

Brabham, Daren C. 2009. "Crowdsourced advertising: how we outperform Madison Avenue." *Flow: A Critical Forum on Television and Media Culture* 9, no. 10. http://flowtv.org/?p=3221.

___. 2010. "Moving the crowd at Threadless." *Information, Communication & Society* 13:1122-145. doi: 10.1080/13691181003624090.

___. 2012. "Crowdsourcing: a model for leveraging online communities." In *The Routledge Handbook of Participatory Cultures*, edited by A. Delwiche and J. Henderson, 120-129. London: Routledge, 2012.

___. 2013. *Crowdsourcing*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Chwialkowska, Agnieszka. 2012. "Crowdsourcing as a customer relationship building tool." *Journal of Positive Management* 3:18-32. doi: 10.12775/JPM.2012.002.

Clapp, Melissa J., and Stacey R. Ewing. 2013. "Using students to make instructional videos: report of an initial experiment." *The Reference Librarian* 54:332-340. doi: 10.1080/02763877.2013.806192.

Collins, Nancy, and Eva Dodsworth. 2011. "Reaching first-year students during orientation week." *Partnership: the Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 6(2):1-8.

Estellés-Arolas, Enrique, and Fernando González-Ladrón-de-Guevara. 2012. "Toward an integrated crowdsourcing definition." *Journal of Information Science* 38:189-200. doi: 10.1177/0165551512437638.

Forsyth, Ellen (2012). "Learning through play: games and crowdsourcing for adult education." *APLIS* 25(4):166-173.

Freshmen Orientation (FRO) Peer Leaders, in discussion with the authors, February 9, 2010.

Green, Samuel Swett. 1876. "Personal relations between librarians and readers." *American Library Journal* 1(Oct):74-81.

Howe, Jeff. 2006. "The rise of crowdsourcing." *Wired* 14(6):176-178.

Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. Association of College and Research Libraries. January 18, 2000. http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency.

Johnson, Margeaux, Melissa J. Clapp, Stacey R. Ewing, and Amy Buhler. 2011. "Building a participatory culture: collaborating with student organizations for twenty-first century library instruction." *Collaborative Librarianship* 3(1):2-15.

Kotler, Philip, and Gary Armstrong. (2012). *Principles of Marketing*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Kotler, Philip, and Kevin Lane Keller. (2012). *Marketing Management*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Matthew, Brian. 2009. *Marketing Today's Academic Library*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Ramaswamy, Venkat. (2009). "Co-creation of value – towards an expanded paradigm of value creation." *Marketing Review St. Gallen* 26:11-17. doi: 10.1007/s11621-009-0085-7.

Salter, Mark. 2013. "Crowdsourcing: student-driven learning using Web 2.0 technologies in an introduction to globalization." *Journal of Political Science Education* 9:362-365. doi: 10.1080/15512169.2013.796259.

Schachter, Debbie. (2013). "Creating value by building relationships." *Information Outlook* 17(5):28-29.

Soroya, Saira Hanif, and Kanwal Ameen. (2013). "LIS marketing approach in libraries: a selected literature review." *Pakistan Library & Information Science Journal* 44(4):4-18.

Surowiecki, James. 2004. *The wisdom of crowds: why the many are smarter than the few and how collective wisdom shapes business, economies, societies, and nations*. New York: Doubleday.

Tapscott, Don, and Anthony D. Williams. (2008). *Wikinomics: how mass collaboration changes everything*. New York: Penguin Group.

Taylor, Paul, and Scott Keeter, eds. 2010. Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next – Confident, Connected, Open to Change. Pew Research Center, February. http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf.

The First-Year Experience and Academic Libraries: A select, annotated bibliography. Association of College and Research Libraries. January 1, 2004. http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/sections/is/iswebsite/projpubs/tmcfyebib.

Thorpe, Angie, and Heather Bowman. (2013). "Promotion discovery: creating an in-depth library marketing campaign." *Journal of Library Administration*, 53:100-121. doi: 10.1080/01930826.2013.853485.

Topping, Keith, and Stewart W. Ehly. 1998. Introduction to Peer-Assisted Learning. In K. Topping and S. Ehly (Eds.), *Peer-Assisted Learning* (pp 1-23). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. doi: 10.4135/9781412963848.n207.

Zickuhr, Kathryn, and Lee Rainie. 2014. Summary of Findings. In *Younger Americans and Public Libraries*. Pew Research Center, September. http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/09/10/younger-americans-and-public-libraries/.

Figure 1: Institutional Commitment to Student Advancement in Higher Education

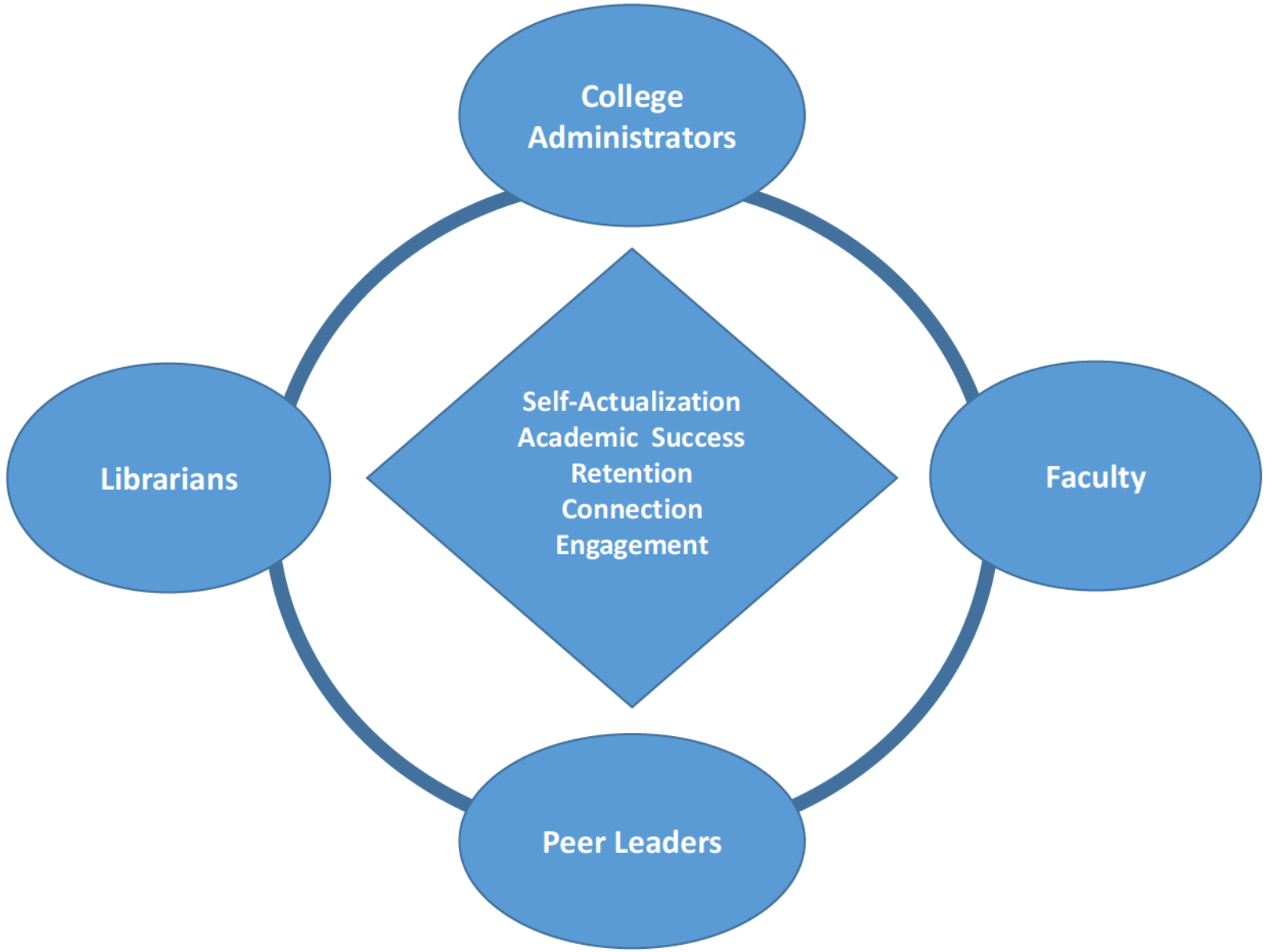


FIGURE 2: Newman Library Initiatives with FYE Programs

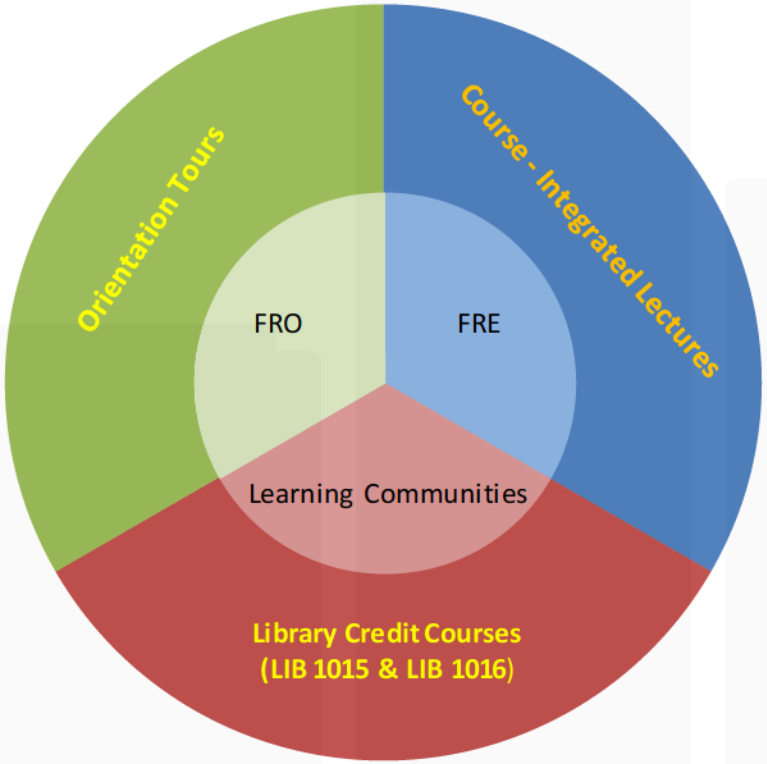


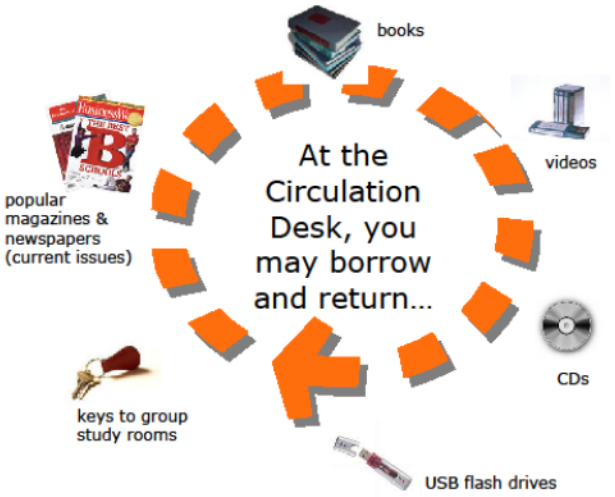
Figure 3: Circulation Desk Handout for Self-Directed Library Tour

William and Anita Newman Library

New Students Library Tutorial

Self-Guided Library Orientation and Quiz

2



You may also…

- Pick-up and return material borrowed from other CUNY libraries
- Pick up **Interlibrary Loan (ILL)** materials
- Get material your professor placed on **Course Reserve**
- Borrow a **laptop computer** or a **graphing calculator** from the 3rd floor counter

William and Anita Newman Library
http://newman.baruch.cuny.edu

Validate your Baruch ID card at the Circulation Desk to…

- ✓ Use the **Self-Checkout Machine** to borrow books (See the map of floor 2)
- ✓ Visit any of the **19 other CUNY libraries**
- ✓ Check your library record to know what books you have borrowed and their due dates via the **My Account** link in the online library catalog, CUNY+
- ✓ Request a book from another CUNY library and have it sent here.

Did you know?

The **Interlibrary Loan (ILL)** service allows you to borrow books and get articles from other libraries. ILL increases your access to books and articles beyond Baruch's library collection.

You can get a 2 gigabyte **flash drive** for $25. When you are done with it, you can return it and get your money back!

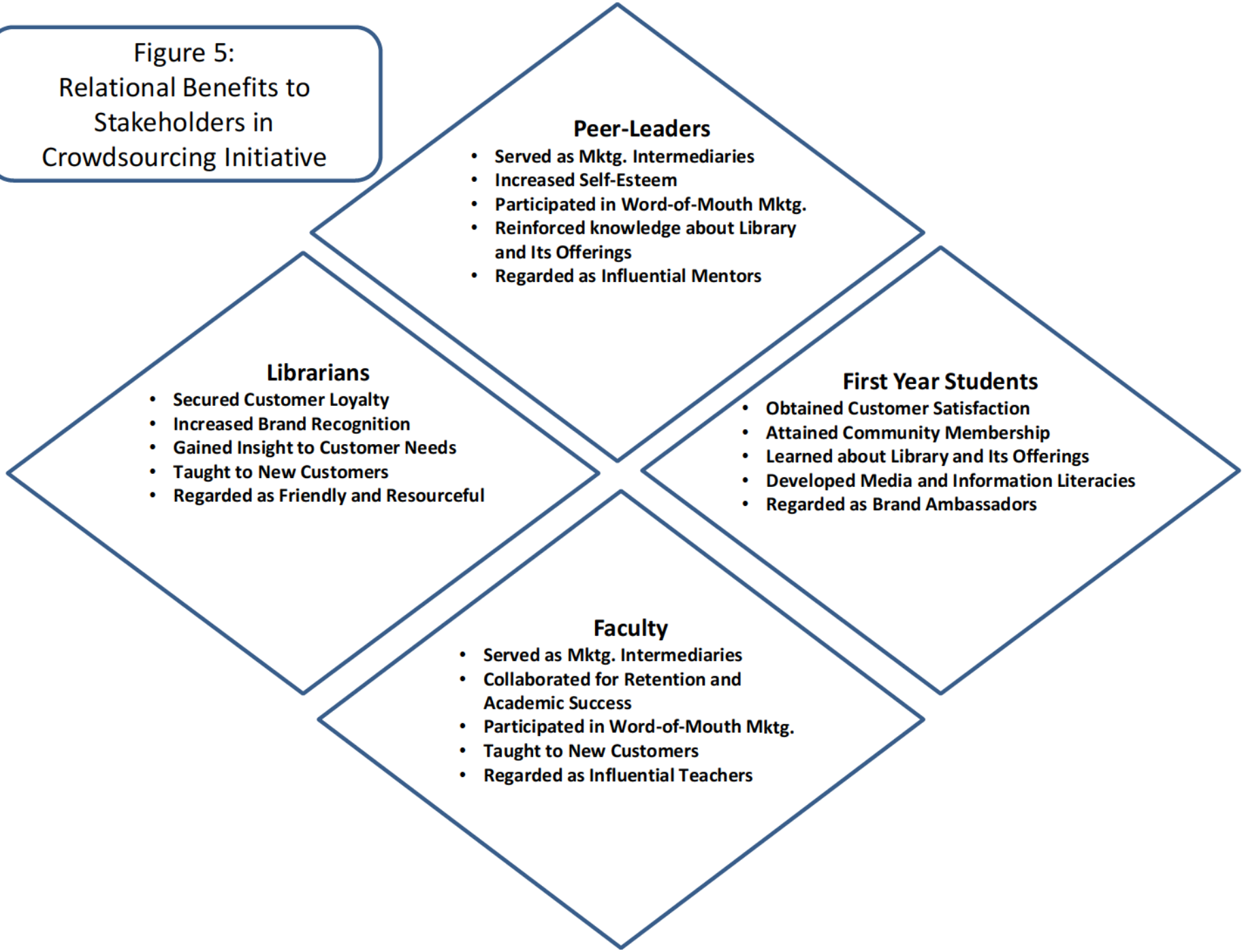
Course Reserve materials are assigned readings or supplemental materials (books, articles, text-books, past exams, etc.) that your professor placed at the circulation desk for you to borrow for two hours in the library or in rare cases, overnight.

E-Reserves are course reserve materials available in electronic format that can be accessed from on or off campus.

To find items on reserve, go to the library home page on the web and click "E-Reserve."

Figure 4: Image from Newman Library's *YouTube* page

Figure 5:
Relational Benefits to Stakeholders in Crowdsourcing Initiative



Appendix: First-Year Newman Library-Baruch College Initiatives

Library-College Initiatives	*Library Orientation Tours* paired with *Freshmen Orientation Seminar (FRO)*	*Course-integrated lectures* paired with *Freshmen English (FRE)*	*Library Credit Courses* (LIB 1015 & 1016) paired with *Learning Communities*
GOALS	• Familiarize students with the services, resources and facilities ("offerings") of the Newman library. • Associate positivity, feelings of ease and fun with the library.	• Introduce students to key Information Literacy (IL) concepts to: Articulate info needs, Access info, and Evaluate info. • Associate qualities of friendliness and support with librarians. • Promote future interactions with the library/librarians.	• Teach LIB foundational curriculum. • Collaborate with faculty teaching other learning community courses.
OBJECTIVES	• Communicate a uniform, clear and concise message. • Define the purpose and value of the library's offerings. • Identify which library offerings are useful to students. • Reduce library anxiety by positive interaction with librarians/ peer leaders and the fun of a contest.	• Collaborate with English faculty to develop customized sessions. • Teach key IL concepts. • Project image of librarians as friendly and supportive. • Encourage students to participate in other library offerings (e.g. research consultations, online tutorials, laptop loan, etc.)	• Taking LIB 1000 courses, students will analyze the way information is produced, organized and evaluated in the social sciences, humanities and business disciplines. • Collaborate with faculty to form course links.
HOW ACHIEVED	• Library produces video with Peer Leaders on "day in the life" of a student in the library. • After viewing video, students explore the library. • Students identify a useful "library tip" to share by creating their own videos for the contest.	• Library instruction held during regular class times with English faculty present. • Hands-on experience provided in classrooms with computers. • Library instruction sessions reach students at point of need. • Librarians build rapport with students by being friendly and helpful.	• Librarians teach semester-long credit courses. • Teach IL and select info topics. • Interest students to consider Information Studies Minor (LIB 3000 and 4000 level courses).