

Promoting library resources and services through student champions, an example from the National Medical Library at the United Arab Emirates University

Östlundh, L., Al Sheryani, R. & Pasha, K.B. The National Medical Library, United Arab Emirates University

Introduction

Reaching out to library users to promote new or underutilized resources requires creativity, time and good knowledge about user preferences. The vast variety of online marketing channels enable librarians to be creative and communicate with users beyond the library walls. An innovative strategy targeting the specific needs of library users is a key factor for success.

The concept of Library Champions is used in libraries worldwide to expand the reach of resource promotion and library instructions where volunteering students who are enthusiastic about library matters take on the role as advocates for the library among their peers and the wider university and national community.

Library Champions at the National Medical Library at UAEU

At the National Medical Library (NML) at the United Arab Emirates University in Al Ain, the concept of "Library Champions" has been introduced as a support for enhancing the impact of library marketing initiatives and events. Medical students from different year groups and members of the library's student advisory team are regularly involved in promoting and presenting library resources and services on a voluntary basis.

The Library Champions have been instrumental in sharing library news and promotion materials via their own online and social networks and have helped to coordinate events such as the library's open house, National Day celebrations and brown bag workshops about medical information resources.



Student champions presenting at NML's National Day celebration in December 2018



Example of poster created by Library Champions

Champions as partners at library workshops and events

The student champion program has been of great support for the NML where the champions for example have co-presented at library workshops and in information literacy training sessions together with librarians. In this role, the Library Champions help the librarians by demonstrating and sharing experiences from using library resources and services through a valuable student and user perspective.

The most engaged champions have been involved in event and resource marketing by creating attractive workshop posters and video material. One example of this is the video about Shaikh Zayed's vision for health and the development of health care in UAE that was presented as part of the library exhibition "Historical moments from the past" and produced by two of NML's talented Library Champions.



Video produced by Library Champions installed as a part of the library exhibition "Historical moments from the past, the development of health care in UAE under the leadership of Shaikh Zayed" that was launched in December 2018

The champions have been invited to represent the library at different VIP and academic events outside the Medical College. Two medical students were trained to demonstrate the library's latest blended learning and augmented reality resources at official visits by members from the UAE Royal Family in January and February 2019.



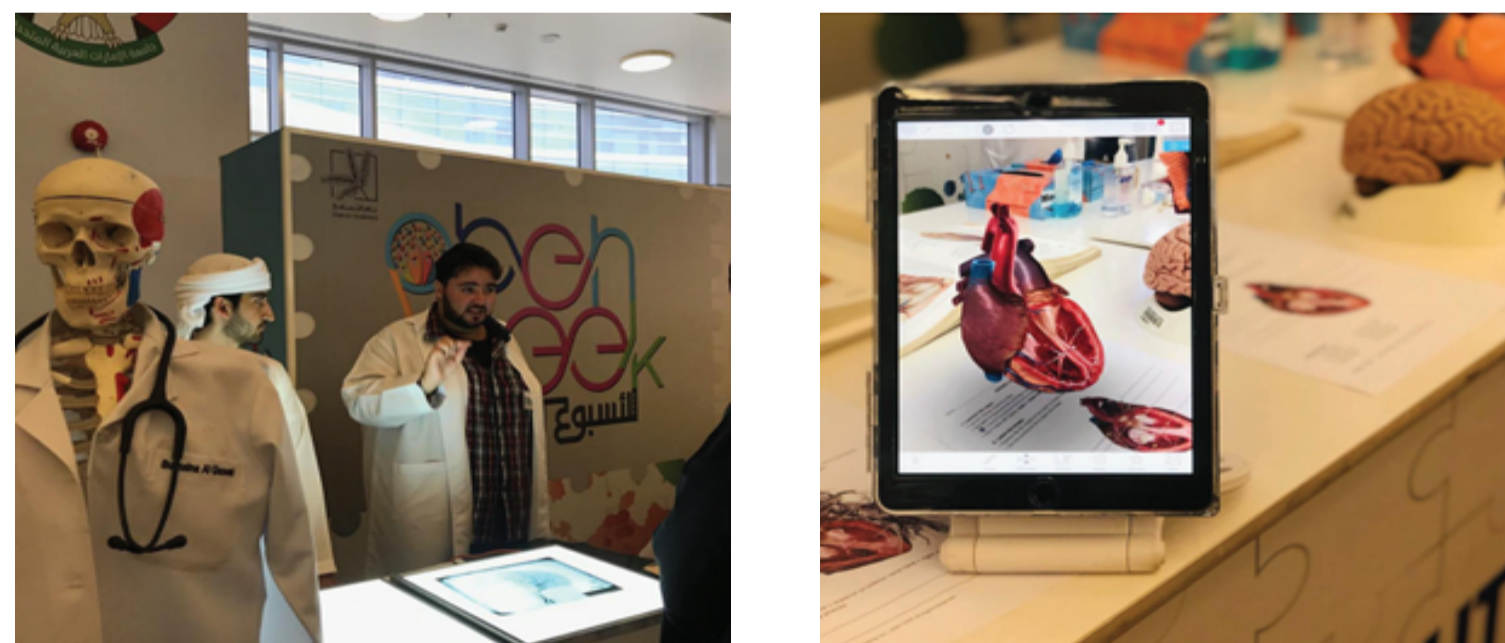
The Library Champions demonstrating augmented anatomy resources to His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan in January 2019



The Champions demonstrating library resources to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan at the UAEU innovation week in February 2019.

An area where involvement of Library Champions has proven to be specifically helpful is in connection to organizing library's lunch workshops. Volunteer students have been responsible for selecting a topic and date for the workshops and have helped with designing posters and marketing materials. The champions promote the events by reaching out to their peers through class or student organizations communication channels like group chats and social media pages resulting in very high workshop attendance.

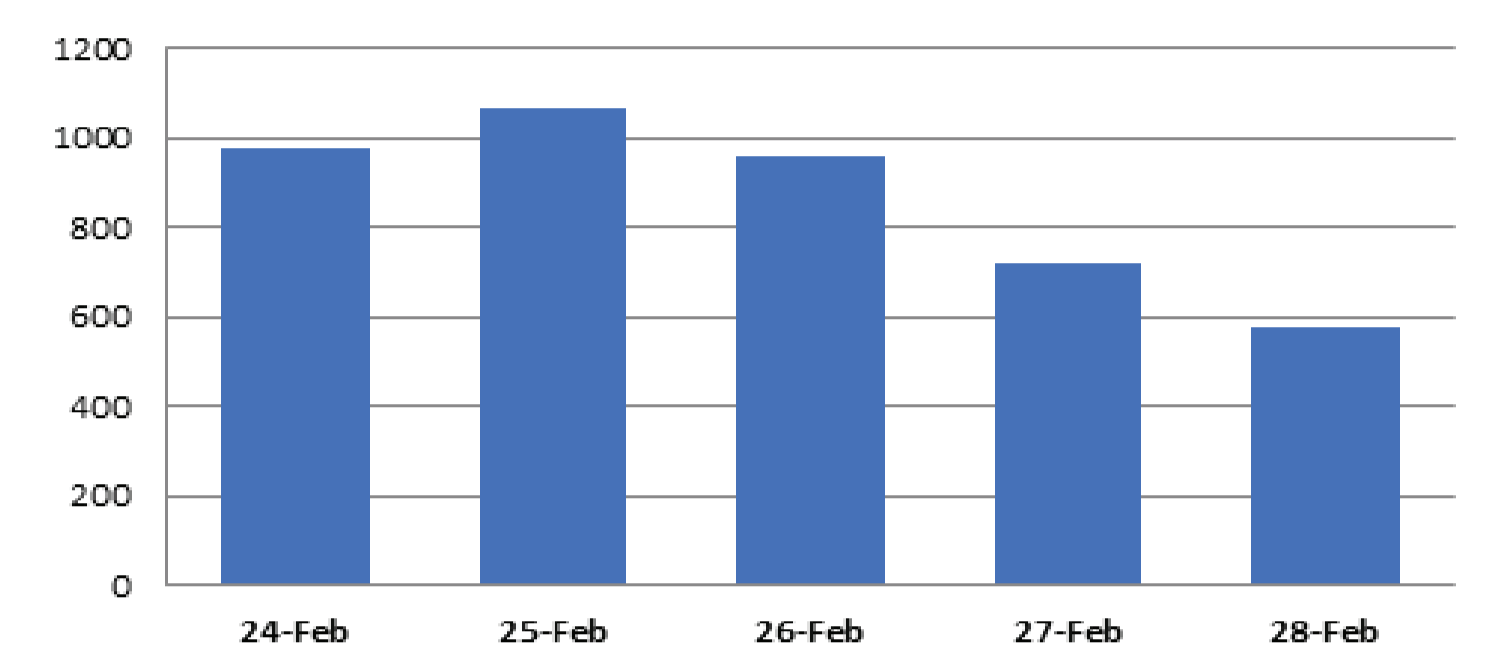
The NML champions also took part in the 2019 UAEU Open Week by showcasing medical library resources to visitors from UAEU and the wider community and are always involved in library events as speakers or organizers for medical related exhibitions or games.



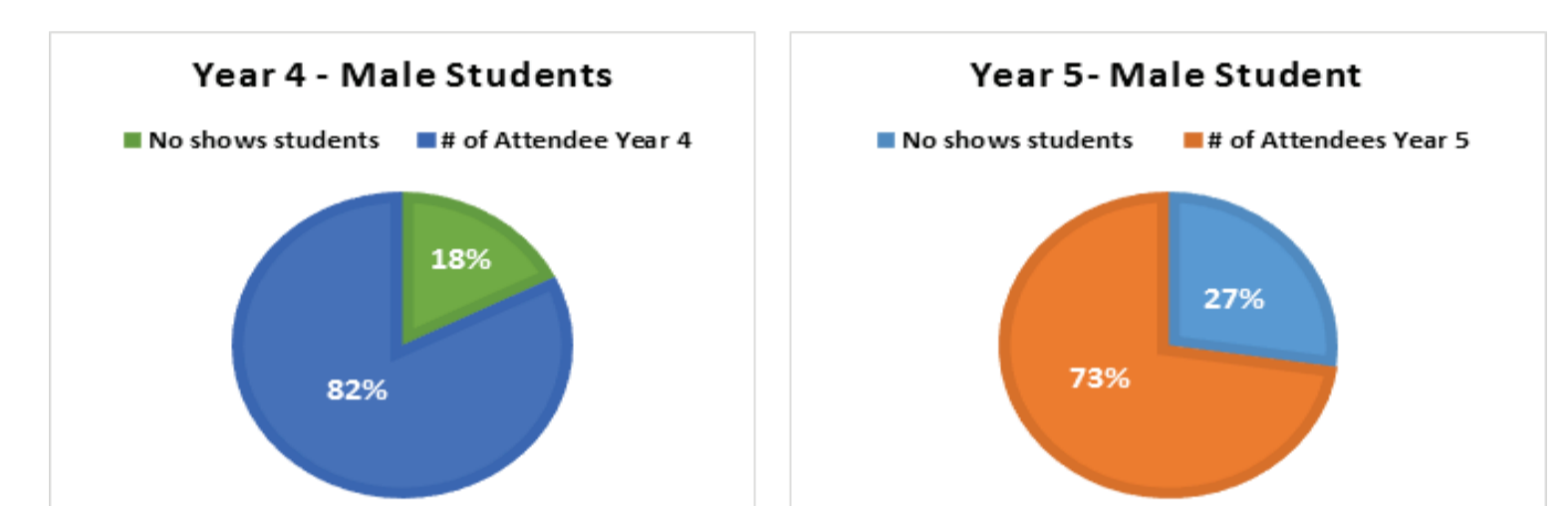
The Champions represented the CMHS and the NML in a booth at the open week at UAEU main campus in February 2019

Impact

Introducing Library Champions at NML has proven to be an efficient way of promoting library resources and services. Increased online and onsite library usage has been recorded in connection to events involving the champions. Workshops promoted and co-organized by the Library Champions generally have a higher attendance rate than workshops organized by the library only and an increase resource usage is recorded in connection to the event presented by the champions.



The bar chart illustrates the high usage of the video lecture platform "Lecturio", one of the resources presented by the Library Champions during the UAEU Open Week in February 2019.



The pie chart illustrates two lunch workshops co-organized with the Library Champions with %82 and %73 attendance.



Conclusion

With the help of the enthusiastic and committed champions the library has been able to reach out to the medical student community beyond the traditional library marketing channels. The Library Champions have also strengthened the relationship between the library and the student community and been a valuable source of information about medical student's educational and just-in-time need for information and services.

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National day photography by UAEU photographer: Ashok Prasad
Workshop poster designed by the Library Champion: Mohammed Al Dhanhani
Poster designed by publication Unit, UAE University.