

Summary



Digital Media Relying More on Subscribers, Less on Banner Ads / Quality Has Its Price – and Customers Are Willing to Pay It / Subscriptions Are Booming, but Consumers Often Overlook Rise in Their Monthly Expenses (Boris Hänßler)

(pp. 538 – 543)

For the traditional forms of media there is good reason to give a sigh of relief. Larger numbers of readers are now willing to take out digital subscriptions. A forerunner in this area is the »New York Times«, which continues to increase its subscription numbers using a drastic strategy – in some cases, subscription offers cost as little as two Euros per month. The newspaper can afford to offer such low prices due to its massive number of readers. In the second quarter of 2021 the paper reported 6.99 million digital subscribers. Advertising banners are in decline. Due to an increase in premium offers, the average time spent on websites has risen. Readers are no longer bargain-hunters. Instead, quality means content that can be trusted.

Meanwhile, in the ebook marketplace, Amazon is testing a new business model. The Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) has entered into an agreement with Amazon Publishing whereby the 10,000 ebooks and audio books at Amazon Publishing will also become available through DPLA by the end of 2021. Until now Amazon had refused to cooperate with libraries in any way. Now American library patrons will be able to access these titles via 'SimplyE', the free e-reader app which was developed by the New York Public Library. About 1000 other publishers already offer their ebooks through this app.

Nearly all commercially available apps for smartphones are based on subscription plans. It has even become difficult to find apps that do not involve taking out a subscription.

Focussing on Staff, not Users / User Experience from a Different Perspective / How Staff Members' Motivation Can Be Increased (Annika Siranusch Dolabdjian, Tobias Seidl, Cornelia Vohnhof)

(pp. 556 – 559)

In recent years there has been a growing awareness that studying user experience (UX) can reveal the needs and desires of users and then ultimately be better served. By employing established methods of UE, libraries develop services and programmes and facilitate positive experiences among users. Examples of this can be found at the German National Library of Economics (ZBW); Berlin Public Libraries Federation (VÖBB); or the Wageningen University and Research Library in The Netherlands. Most of these projects involve one precise question: how should a product or service be designed to evoke a positive experience for the user? This often involves focussing on the technical aspects of the product or service (such as the interface) and finding out which psychological needs are being met. But recently some rethinking has occurred and UX is also being implemented in the context of library employment, with the goal of creating as much positive experience among staff members as possible. Ultimately this will lead to increasing job motivation.

Even as late as the 20th century, service professions – a category to which library work belongs – were regarded as paraprofessional occupations, which involved giving priority to the needs and desires of the client or customer. But UX methods can contribute to expanding that scope to include the needs and wishes of a library's employees.

Where Schools Fail, Public Libraries Are in Demand / New Educational Apps for Children's and Youth Libraries (Thomas Feibel)

(pp. 566 – 569)

Now with the dangerous COVID-19 pandemic in its second year, it has been impressively demonstrated how useful digital media are for our jobs, communication, and teamwork. Many industries were able to continue functioning smoothly and survive because they had learned the requisite lessons. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily true for the sectors which deal with education, children, and young adults. Especially with regard to the fundamental reconfiguration of the delivery of school instruction, many municipal school authorities did not cut a good figure. A well-thought out, stringent and operational digital strategy for schools is hardly discernible so far.

Praise must be given to the many children, adolescents, parents, and teachers who in these difficult times took the plunge into online schooling with a high level of motivation. But one important aspect of this endeavour has proven inadequate: media literacy. And it is needed more than ever. For this reason, the digital offerings of children's and young adult libraries have become even more important. For years they have been closing a serious loophole with their technical infrastructure, trained staff members and multitude of workshops. The situation resembles the story of the hare and the tortoise. Schools have set their sights on the goal-line, but children's and youth libraries already reached it long ago. Promoting media literacy – for example programming – is only one of the tasks which libraries have added to their agenda. Typical characteristics include being thoroughly dauntless in the face of technical innovation and exhibiting a high level of dependability in these uncertain times. The selection of apps for teaching and learning that are presented in this issue of BuB offers further support to this endeavour.

Translated by Martha Baker