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The Impact of SDA Values and Heritage on book collection and services. The Helderberg College Experience

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INTRODUCTION:

The Seventh Day Adventist Church and its different organizations are based on certain values. Helderberg College as a Seventh Day Adventist Institution has developed their own set of values which are the following: Transparency, consultation, respect and innovation. The values mentioned are operationalised through the following principles

Christ –Centeredness we choose always to reflect the character, values and ministry of Jesus and incorporate Christian principles in contact with students and community as we work in partnership with him. Never to neglect or server our personal dedication to Christ or misrepresent him.

Person-orientedness We choose always to : enhance the self-worth of each person we contact in our teaching ministry, respect the dignity of the individual, listen sympathetically, honour confidentiality,

Apologise when appropriate. Never to treat others in a patronising, authoritarian or autocratic manner or intentionally ignore or humiliate or be judgemental or abrupt.

Whole Life Excellence We choose always to recognise the importance of meeting with students and other partners in the education process in a variety of experiences in order for a broader range of opportunities. Show by word and example the value of personal and professional integrity to lecturer and student. Encourage questions, discussion creative criticism and evaluation, Support a mentoring programme where each individual student is affirmed in both an informal and formal manner. Strive to provide a unique education for the whole of life. Never to settle for mediocrity or tolerate dishonesty by staff or students.

Focus on Service: We choose to provide a service at Helderberg College that creates a client friendly environment of transparency, information assurance and comfort. Train students for service in the community by requiring involvement in community projects. Never to be wary of well doing Pieter Wessels Library aims to promote and support the operational values of Helderberg College. The library are strategic place to support and enhance the academic programme of the college by rendering a service and providing up to date book collection that exemplify the values of the college. I will be looking at the impact of SDA values and heritage on both the library user and the SDA library professional who delivers books and services to the user. When the user or the librarian is a person with a disability, the SDA values are truly tested or tested for their worth.

IMPACT OF SDA VALUES AND HERITAGE ON THE BOOK COLLECTIONS

Financial implications and book collections.

Any library has a book collection that is depended on the funds allocated for the acquisition of new books. An academic library like Pieter Wessels library is also depended on the book budget for the year. Pieter Wessels book collection consist of +- 80 000 books . According to the library review report of 2009 and the AAA committee it was recommended a drastic increase in the book budget. The values of transparency and consultation play a major role in the allocation of funds for books. The Library director recommends the amount that is needed for books but the Vice President of finance makes the final decision in the allocation of funds for books. It is the library director that orders books from suppliers and she or he needs to find out if the suppliers are transparent in their dealings with the library and that there is no corruption amongst the suppliers.

Pieter Wessels as an academic library must provide academic literature and books to support the academic program of the college, and we as a staff are doing our best to render a professional service. As a Seventh Day Adventist college Helderberg College integrates faith and learning in the academic program as well as the Adventist heritage. Pieter Wessels library must make provision in their book budget for the allocation of Adventist Literature. Over the years the library director acquired Adventist literature from overseas, and that is how the Adventist books were build on.

The Adventist church in South Africa have a rich history but the major problem that we have is that there are not many or hardly any books written about the local development of the church. The library has a heritage collection that consists of books of the 18th century. The collection also includes information on the history of Helderberg College, although it is incomplete. Mrs young the ex Library Director added another dimension to the Heritage collection by adding any new books that Adventist writers wrote especially African Writers. One of the books that were added to the collection was the book entitled Look At Me compiled by Marlene Le Roux and to which I contributed to. At Pieter Wessels library we use the Dewey Decimal Classification system when classifying the books. All the Adventist literature are placed in 230. And 286. Classes and I have wondered if we cannot adapt the DDC nos to cater for the local needs.

Pieter Wessels library and the E.G. White centre are hoping to work together in researching the history of the SDA church in SA. There are still many of the older people that knows about the history of the church but who has not written it down but has been using the oral tradition.

BOOK COLLECTION AND THE USER AFFECTED BY A DISABILITY.

People affected by disability should be taken into account when libraries acquire new books. In the past academic libraries disregarded people with disabilities and did not cater for their needs. People who are visually impaired or blind are the ones who are marginalised by the fact that libraries do not cater for their needs. A Blind student at an academic library has to make use of a reader who will have to read to them and this might include a fee that the blind person has to pay.

According to the South African library and information charter SA has the National library for the blind which provide a national and information service to blind and printed –handicapped readers in SA. The library is a national library searching the reading and information needs of visually and print impaired persons throughout SA and increasingly Sub Sahara Africa. Audio and Braille books are

circulated to its widespread and extensive membership via postal delivery. This service is very limited and need to be expanded through organized structures for example public libraries.

Although Helderberg College do not have any visually impaired or blind students on campus, it should not be seen as a deterrent not to look or investigate the possibility of working on a project of translating the Adventist literature in to Braille and to print a large print edition of the Adventist literature. We also serve the community at large and there might be blind people in the community.

A Visually impaired or blind user will definitely appreciate the fact that they can access books in Braille from the library in the community, which will allow them to read their books at their own time and they do not have to wait for someone else to read to them. Innovation in the library will definitely assist the user with a disability in the orientation of the library. The different subjects on each floor should be labelled in such a way that it is visible and readable for all disabled users. Braille labels should be used which will make it possible for blind people to read.

THE IMPACT OF SDA VALUES AND HERITAGE ON SERVICES IN THE LIBRARY.

The aim of Pieter Wessels library is to render a professional and dedicated service to the staff and students of Helderberg college. As a staff we advertise the services available at the library on a regular basis through email and advertising boards. As a staff we also try to do our best to live out the values of the college in our daily interaction with the students. According to the report of the review committee of 2009 students and staff were very happy with the services that are being rendered to them.

SERVICES AND THE USER WITH A DISABILITY

In South Africa the Constitution and its Bill of Rights , the promotion of Equality and prevention of unfair discrimination act of 2000, the South African Library of the Blind act of 1998, and the white paper on an integrated National Disability strategy of 1997 are the main pieces of legislation that impact on the lives of people with disabilities. South Africa has rectified the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and its optional protocol. These official documents generally emphasis the right of access to information of people with disabilities.

In South Africa we still have a situation where disabled people or people with disabilities are excluded from using the library, because of accessibility being one of the major obstacles. The checklist of the IFLA standing committee of libraries serving Disadvantaged persons are a useful tool for all types of libraries, and its aims to improve services, access to buildings material and programmes. At a more practical level library and information services to people with disabilities should emphasis equality of access by integrating their service requirements into mainstream services where ever this is possible.

Two values of Helderberg College that I think is very important for the library and service delivery are being Person –Orientedness by treating people with respect and enhancing the self-worth of the person. The other important value is Focus on Service which creates a client-friendly environment, of transparency, information assurance and comfort. At Pieter Wessels Library our objective are to deliver a service to all staff and students that are of the highest quality and standard.

Accessibility to libraries has been an ongoing struggle for persons with a disability. In South Africa we still find buildings that are not accessible for persons with a disability. At Helderberg College we have similar problems with accessibility and as a librarian with a disability it is very difficult moving around campus and in the library. We found ways and means to limit my use of the stairs by having my office upstairs and using the back entrance to enter the library because it had only one step. Only after working for almost ten years at Helderberg did they make a ramp at the back door. The committee looking into accessibility suggested that users with a disability also use the back entrance but I then advised them not to do that because that will send a wrong and negative message, I then

suggested that we make the front entrance more accessible because as a disabled patron you might feel discriminated against if you cannot use the front entrance. The college administration is looking at building a ramp and changing the front entrance and replacing the present gate for a more accessible gate.

We have also looked at our tables in the library and have made 1 table on each floor more accessible for wheelchairs. We made the tables higher by putting blocks underneath them which made it easier for wheelchair users to sit at the tables. The shelves in our library are very high and a person with a disability cannot remove books from the shelves. As a librarian I cannot reach the top shelves and always ask students to assist me which they are quite willing to do. The library acquired a book catcher which can be used to take books from the shelves. Library management has made a decision that they would take the disability aspect in consideration when new shelving is bought for the library. The administration are also planning to put a lift in the library which will be a great help for disabled patrons and staff, because at present my movement in the library are very restricted. As part of our service to people with disabilities we are also looking at different devices that can assist them in making their visit an enjoyable one.

Another important aspect of service to people with disabilities is the attitude of the librarians towards patrons with a disability. It is very important and essential that librarians have a positive attitude when serving a patron with a disability because their attitude and approach can and sometimes will determine whether the patron will have a good experience at the library. As a disabled librarian I realised that I had to educate my colleagues about disabilities and by just interacting with me on a daily basis they realised that disability does not mean inability. I am being treated with the same respect that they expect to be treated. I am also involved with awareness programmes relating to disability and I also use my book to educate students and staff. As a qualified librarian with a disability I have experienced a lot of discrimination on the basis of my disability and that I feel has led to my colleagues not giving me the respect I deserve. I am also aware of the fact that as a disabled librarian I must continually prove myself. The library user with a disability will feel valued and respected if they see and feel that the library is a welcoming place by providing the necessary devices necessary to make their visit to the library an enjoyable experience. As a disabled librarian I would appreciate it if my work environment is more disabled friendly which will allow me to execute my duties in an independent manner.

Conclusion

SDA values and Heritage will have its greatest impact when both user and library professional at Pieter Wessels library and SDA libraries in general are factored into the management of book collection and the delivery of information services.

In conclusion I would like to say that this presentation was done in the hope to have Adventist Librarians around the world reflect on how they implement the SDA values and their services and book collection with emphasis the user with a disability.

