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Environmental Scan of Off-Site Reference in Academic Libraries

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Environmental Scan of Off-Site Reference in Academic Libraries • Elizabeth Stephan & Penny Scott

28.4% currently holding off-site reference

Length of Service and Location

- 26.7%: less than 1 year
- 20% 3: years
- 13.5%: 1 year
- 13.3%: 2 years
- 16.7%: 5+ years
- 10% 4 years

Hours

- 40%: 2-4 hrs/week
- 33.3%: 1-2 hrs/week
- 26.7%: 5+ hrs/week

- 50%: Office in academic dept
- 16.7%: Study area
- 3.3%: Student union
- 3.3%: Computer lab
- 20%: Other

Will you continue?

- 80%: Yes
- 10%: No
- 10%: Don't know

Future of Service

Comments

- Want to expand
- Dorm hours not useful, but want to try elsewhere
- Dept I serve not on campus, so hours are important
- Want to discontinue, but faculty love it
- Discontinued, but restarted because it increased visibility

Relationship Building (Top 4 answers)

Faculty

- 60%: Increased collegiality
- 53.3%: More familiar w/information needs for classes
- 40%: Increased collaboration on assignments/instruction
- 36.7%: More familiar w/research needs

Students

- 60%: Librarian-student relationships
- 60%: Increased student awareness of the library
- 56.7%: More aware of information needs
- 50%: More familiar w/assignments

32.1% plan to hold off-site reference

Planning Process

How long have you been planning?

- 71.9%: 6 months or less
- 12.5%: 6 months-1 year
- 9.4%: 2+ years
- 6.3%: 1-2 years

Why do you want to offer service?

- 28.1%: Increase visibility
- 25%: Become more involved
- 12.5%: Provide better service
- 21.9%: Other (renovations, job desc change, all)
- 3.1%: Align w/library outreach/marketing plan

Time Frame, Location

Where will you be located?

- 40.6%: Don't know
- 25%: Office in academic subject dept.
- 12.5%: coffee shop/dining area
- 12.5%: Student housing
- 6.3%: Student union
- 3.1%: Study area not in library

Are others offering service?

- 37.5%: Yes
- 12.5%: Now
- 50%: Don't know

If yes, are others interested?

- 34.5%: Yes
- 17.2%: No
- 48.3%: Don't know

Will you reduce hrs at ref desk?

- 18.8%: Yes
- 75%: No
- 3.1%: Librarians not at ref desk
- 3.1%: Library doesn't have ref desk

Will this replace ref desk?

- 81.5%: No
- 3.7%: Yes
- 14.8%: Don't know

14.2% stopped off-site hours

Length of Service and Location

- 36.8%: 1 year
- 26.3%: 2 years
- 21.1%: less than 1 year
- 10.5%: 3 years
- 5.3%: 4+ years

Hours

- 52.6%: 1-2 hrs/week
- 42.1%: 2-4 hrs/week
- 5.3%: 5+ hrs/week

- 26.3%: Office in academic dept
- 15.8%: Coffee shop/dining area
- 10.5 %: Computer lab
- 10.5%: Study area outside library
- 10.5%: Student Union
- 21.1%: Other
- 10.5%: Student housing

Reasons for Stopping

Why did you stop?

- 47.4%: Lack of interest from faculty
- 15.8% Other
- 15.8 % Low Statistics

Would you start again?

- 42.1%: No
- 42.1%: Don't know
- 15.8%: Yes

Some reasons for discontinuing hours

- Went to student union, 2 hrs a day but stopped due to lack of interest
- Set-up lunch/snack area in classroom building; students in eating and time-out mode.
- Reconfiguration of space in academic building

25.5% never held off-site hours

Why have you never held off-site hours?

- 18.8%: Lack of faculty/dept interest
- 15.6%: Lack of time
- 6.3%: Budget
- 6.3%: Don't think they're useful
- 3.1%: Lack of space
- 50%: Other

Reasons (Summary)

- Others have tried w/little success
- Takes time away from other tasks
- Small campus, don't see a need
- Too many constituents to serve to do this
- Mostly to virtual reference
- Combination of everything: Lack of time, budget constraints, lack of space

For more information and background on our survey and our own experiences with off-site reference, see our website: http://bit.ly/off_site

