DW SJSU MLIS – THE HYPERLINKED LIBRARY

Just another #hyperlib Community Sites site
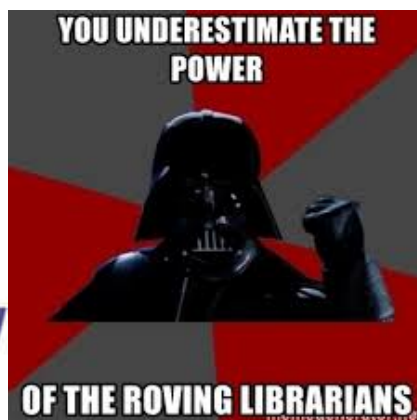
EMERGING TECHNOLOGY PLANNING ASSIGNMENT: ROVING LIBRARY SERVICES AT USF

Goals/Objectives for Technology / Service

Inspired by the possibilities of "roving" library services, the hyperlinked academic library, the pioneering example of the Hunt Library in North Carolina, and the insight that "people are hyperlinks too" (Stephens, 2018), I decided to explore how to adopt roving services with tablet (iPad) use at the University of South Florida's Library. As technology continues to expand and evolve, libraries are poised to offer more and more of their resources completely remotely and virtually, which I think is a good thing. And, as we learned in module 9, technology continues to be integrated into our everyday lives in light of the proliferation of the "Internet of Things" (OCLC, 2015). At the same time, of course, there continues to be a need in libraries, including academic libraries, to interface with

librarians in person in order to create a *personalized* experience and foster "socially engaged learning" (Basgen & Testori, 2016), as discussed in the sub-module for the hyperlinked academic library. There is such a thing as the Internet of Things, but *we* are the center of that web of interconnectivity. We are its *raison d'être*. It bears repeating: "people are hyperlinks too" (Stephens, 2018).

The idea of roving library services is a very promising model, I think, and one that is proactive, encourages patron engagement, and may also contribute to the university's larger goals of retention, graduation, and career preparation. As such, incorporating roving services alongside other models and modes of interaction with patrons is a novel idea to reach even more patrons and ensure that they are *engaged*, *participating*, and *returning for more*. This, to me, is one expression of the ideal of "participatory service" that we read about earlier this term (Casey & Savastinuk, 2007).

Description of Community to Engage

I wish to engage students (primarily undergraduates but also graduate students) who use the main library of the University of South Florida campus in Tampa, Florida.

Action Brief Statements

For Patrons (Students):

I plan to convince student users of the library of the University of South Florida that by making use of roving library services they will enhance their educational experiences (and their grades), which will better prepare them for graduation and next career steps.

For Library Administrators:

I plan to convince library administrators that by adopting roving library services at the University of South Florida they will improve the use and relevance of the library, which will demonstrate the importance of the library to *university* administrators because it will showcase how essential library services are to student success, student retention, and graduation rates.

Evidence and Resources to Support Technology / Service

- Davidson, S. & Mikkelsen, S. (2009). Desk bound no more: Reference services at a new research university library. *The Reference Librarian*, *50*, 346-355. doi:10.1080/02763870903143591
- Lansing Community College (2018): Reference & Instruction Guide: Roving: http://libguides.lcc.edu/ri/ref-roving
- From *Library Journal*: Matt Enis, "Meet the Tabletarians," 2015: https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=meet-the-tabletarians-mobile-services
- Nunn, B. B., & Ruane, E. (2012). Marketing gets personal: Promoting reference staff to reach users. *Journal of Library Administration*, *52*, 571-580. doi:10.1080/01930826.2012.707955
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- Smith, M. M., & Pietraszewski, B. A. (2004). Enabling the roving reference librarian: Wireless access with tablet PCs. *Reference Services Review*, *32*, 249-255. doi:10.1108/00907320410553650

Mission, Guidelines, and Policy related to Technology / Service

Library administration will be involved in setting policies, in conjunction with the assistant dean and the library operations supervisor, as well as other stakeholders such as reference librarians and student assistants who would be part of the roll out. I will ask library administration or the head of reference services for any existing policies in place that the incorporation of roving service may impact. At the very least, I would ensure that roving services are implemented in accordance with the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) "Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers."

It is also be a good idea to think about the relationship between this project and the mission, vision, and values of the library.

In addition, the mission and vision statement of the university should be considered.

Funding Considerations for this Technology / Service

It is possible that this proposal will not require additional funding, since the library has staff and technological resources that can be relatively easily shifted into roving service support. However, it may be necessary to purchase more *tablet devices*. If so, it may be necessary to apply for a professional development grant from the university. Another option is to consider external funding in the form of grants from say the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). One possibility is the Humanities Collections and Reference Resources (HCRR) program at the NEH.

Action Steps & Timeline

The library director, and possibly the associate dean, will presumably need to OK this project. If the project is not approved, then the proposal can be revised to train a fewer number of librarians and student assistants (say one full-time librarian and two student assistants) to providing roving assistance on a part-time to full-time basis instead of the timeline listed below. Another option is to first *pilot* the roving service with one librarian on a part-time basis to gather data about its success before moving on to next steps and fuller schedules.

Assuming this full project is approved in the near future, the timeline below would put the library on track to implement roving services by the start of the spring 2019 semester in mid to late January 2019. This would leave about 2.5 months for preparation and then an entire new semester to allow

for full implementation by the end of the academic year in preparation for summer 2019 and then the 2019-2020 academic year.

Timeline in Preparation for Spring 2019 Roving Services Roll Out

Target for Administration Consideration and Approval: 6-8 weeks

Preparation/Training of 2 Full-Time Librarians and 2 Part-Time Student Assistants to Become Roving Staff: 2 weeks

(Optional: Removal or Repurposing of Reference Desk on Second Floor: 3 weeks)

Acquisition of 3-4 Tablets (iPads) for Staff Use: 1 week for delivery and set up

Staffing Considerations for this Technology / Service

Fortunately, this is a project that would simply involve *shifting* hours in a new direction. Staff involved would spend time roving and thus away from the traditional reference desk, which would become closed during the operation of roving service. During the first few weeks of implementation, as library patrons become used to the new arrangement, roving librarians could make sure to keep an eye on the reference desk, just in case students continue to visit that location despite signage indicating the new program and approach.

Again, the *ideal* for this program would be to involve 2 full-time professional librarians and 2 part-time student assistants who would have otherwise spent their time behind or in support of traditional reference desks. This would allow for adequate coverage of the multiple floors and needs within the academic library.

One full-time staff member would be stationed (i.e. rove) on the second floor, to offer support for other resources there, such as the writing and tutoring centers and also the Office for Undergraduate Research. Another full-time staff member would rove between the basement and third, fourth, and fifth floors. One of the part-time student assistants would rove the first and second floors, while the other would be responsible for roving the third, fourth, and fifth floors during his or her shift.

Training for this Technology / Service

The two full-time staff members could be largely self-trained (since they are professional librarians) and in consultation with the library operations supervisor and head of reference services. Ideally, this training would be completed by the end of the fall 2018 semester in time to train the two part-time student assistants by the very start of the spring 2019 semester at latest. Each of the part-time student assistants could shadow one or two of the full-time professional librarians in fulfillment of their training over a one or two-week trial period before offering roving services on their own. The student assistants would also be trained on how to properly and efficiently "triage" patron needs

(i.e., direct student to full-time librarians as appropriate, say for graduate student research questions).

Promotion & Marketing for this Technology / Service

One way to promote and market the new roving service is through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs). Of course, it will also be important to post signage at and near the old reference desks so that patrons are informed and not confused about the change. An "old school" way to promote and market is through word-of-mouth engagement with patrons in the course of roving service, which can be taken as an opportunity to proactively introduce one's self to patrons and foster engagement, relationships, and trust with library staff as the program is implemented and takes root. In addition, it is very helpful to promote the program among faculty members (full-time and adjunct faculty) so that they can direct more of their students to the library for help. The new roving librarians might also send outreach emails to deans and department chairs and/or contact professors directly. One other idea is to encourage students to write about their experiences on social media (for example, student might take "selfies" with librarians and post online with hashtags such as #USFLibrary).

Evaluation

The success of the roving reference program will be measured by the number of transactions per week (relative to transactions per week prior to the program) and whether one was able to successfully provide assistance to a need. This evaluation metric is somewhat complicated, however, by the fact that the traditional reference desk presupposes that *students* approach librarians for assistance. In this model, by contrast, it is often the *librarians* who approach the students, even though it is expected that over time students will be encouraged to engage librarians once they become accustomed to the new system.

There are more anecdotal ways to measure success as well, such as the promotion the library receives about its services from social media and blogging. For instance, it would be wonderful to see "success stories" emerge on sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, where patrons might post pictures with their favorite librarians, recommend librarians to their friends, and create *relationships* and a *community* in the process.

If the initial program is successful, it is possible to expand by bringing on one or two more student assistants, such as those who are interested in pursuing MLIS degrees or need to complete an internship. The USF library is a member of the Federal Depository Library Program. Therefore, it might be beneficial to cross-train a special collections staff member or someone familiar with FOIA requests, since the basement floor of the library contains federal and state government documents

that can require specialized knowledge and assistance.

References

Basgen, B. & Testori, P. (2016). Socially engaged learning. *Educause Review*. Retrieved from https://er.educause.edu/articles/2016/3/socially-engaged-learning

Casey, M. E., & Savastinuk, L. C. (2007). *Library 2.0: A guide to participatory library service*. Medford, N.J: Information Today.

Hunt Library. (n.d.). North Carolina State University Libraries. Retrieved from https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/huntlibrary

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Stephens, M. (2018). The hyperlinked library: Exploring the model. INFO 287. Retrieved from https://287.hyperlib.sjsu.edu/module-3-the-hyperlinked-library-model/

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8 thoughts on "Emerging Technology Planning Assignment: Roving Library Services at USF"

Elizabeth El-Akkad says: October 21, 2018 at 6:36 pm (Edit)

I think this a great service to add an academic library! It would be nice to more library staff throughout the whole library. Part of me wonders if keeping at least one physical body at a reference desk at all times would also be helpful. I know when I was in college and worked in the library I would see students coming in to see the reference desk librarian and they would turn around and leave if they were away from the desk, or helping other students. Then again, perhaps they really didn't want the help enough to wait. Thanks for sharing!

Reply

Donald says: October 23, 2018 at 1:47 am (Edit)

Hi Elizabeth! Thank you for reading and this is really good point, especially if the desk remains and it becomes confusing to students about where to go for help (and when). Good communication/signage may help, but this is well taken and definitely don't want to lose any students/patrons in the process!

Reply

Christa Funke says: October 21, 2018 at 11:28 pm (Edit)

Roaming reference service seems like a good way to engage students and provide