

END OF THE COMFORT ZONE

Prioritizing Patron-Centered Service When Resources are Limited

ABSTRACT

Have you been tasked with implementing a new service with little to no lead time? This situation can result in stressed-out staff and unhappy patrons. The Salisbury University Libraries Access Services team faced this situation when we realized our physical course reserves collection would be inaccessible during the Fall 2020 semester. It seemed impossible that we would be able to meet our patrons' needs without overwhelming our staff. Nevertheless, through careful planning, good communication, and a little bit of luck, we were able not only to meet but also exceed our patrons' expectations – all without sacrificing staff happiness. This poster will outline how we provided patron-centered service even under extreme time and staff constraints and share some tips to help you offer responsive service when demand exceeds resources.

PRIORITIES

Student-centered service
Efficient use of time and resources
Availability of high-demand course reserves



LIMITATIONS

Time!
Staff availability and well-being
Students' remote learning
Limited access to print materials
Copyright laws
Software

RESPONSE



Communicate

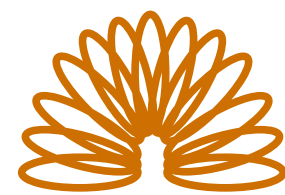
WHAT WE DID...

- Proactively targeted faculty using high-use materials
- Mass emailed all faculty about updated Library services, including digital course reserves options
- Regular staff meetings, fun engagement, and messaging through Slack channels

TIPS



- Offer multiple modes of communication: website, library guides, email, chat, Slack
- Update regularly
- Gather and share feedback and usage data to demonstrate value



Be Flexible

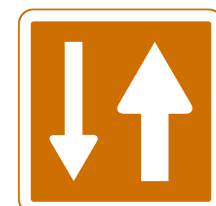
WHAT WE DID...

- Expanded document delivery to all students
- Helped students find free/cheap resources
- Moved ILL scanner into centrally-located area
- Began curbside pickup and paging services
- Offered flexible scheduling
- Staff took scanners home

TIPS



- Repurpose existing equipment
- Provide options and free alternatives
- Cross-train staff and focus on highest need
- Expand other services where possible
- Give staff autonomy



Triage

WHAT WE DID...

- Prioritized high-use materials trapped in print format
- Canceled purchases of physical materials
- Focused on reducing student financial burden by digitizing:
 - Textbooks used in high-enrollment classes
 - Expensive books
 - Items not available used or at low prices as e-books

TIPS



- Use data to your advantage
- Focus on easing student financial burden

BY THE NUMBERS

53

Unique titles manually scanned by SU Libraries staff

1,729

Digital check outs of course reserves items

106,298

Total page views of course reserves web pages

1,788

Hours spent viewing course reserves material by SU students

"Thanks so much for your help with the book, I alerted a few intro students to the CDL when they contacted me about their textbook being delayed. I'm glad there are options for reserves even with this crazy pandemic!"
~ Art Faculty

CONCLUSION

The Salisbury University Libraries found creative ways to serve patrons and encourage staff amid challenging circumstances. With excellent communication, flexible management, and efficient use of resources, we ensured students and faculty could access their course materials without sacrificing staff wellness during an uncertain time. Communicating with faculty in proactive, targeted, and multifaceted ways improved response rates and promoted buy-in. Staff stayed connected by participating in regular online meetings and engaging activities on Slack, and they felt valued and trusted when given the autonomy to work from home with flexible schedules. With limited time and resources, we let the data drive our decisions about what to prioritize, while keeping our focus on providing student-centered service. Ultimately, the SU Libraries fulfilled the most important goals: to serve our patrons and find a way to make our materials as accessible as possible.

"Given the majority of our students are not on the campus, they are waiting for the books to arrive in the mail and some students do not always receive their financial aid in time to purchase books the first or second week."
~ Social Work Faculty