

Communicating with Users Group Executive Summary

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Background

The mission of the George A. Smathers Libraries is to support the information needs of the University of Florida community, serving as a catalyst for research and discovery. This mission cannot be accomplished if UF students, faculty, and staff are unaware of the services and resources that we offer. Responses to the LibQUAL+ survey (a standard survey of library users developed by the Association of Research Libraries) indicate that many UF students and faculty have little awareness or understanding of library resources and services available to them.

Recently, library staff participated in a number of focus groups concerning the new Library West project and a library design exercise run by the School of Art and Art History. These exercises reinforced the LibQUAL+ survey results, indicating, among other issues, that our users often are unaware of available library services, collections, and events. The exercises also indicated that the libraries have a negative and inconsistent image with many of our users. Based on these criticisms, the Communicating with Users Committee undertook an investigation of possible opportunities to project a positive, consistent image and inform our users of our services.

The Committee

The Communicating with Users Committee is an outgrowth of an informal group that met to discuss new ways to inform our users of available library services. The Committee is formally charged with improving the libraries' image and undertaking activities that improve awareness of the university's libraries by disseminating information to users and potential users and to the library staff who interact with them. Within this charge the Committee is to:

- Communicate within the group about activities in their home department that affect library users and sharing this information with colleagues.
- Provide items that should be communicated to users and staff via press releases, newsletters, library web pages, UF Portal, and other venues.
- Identify campus events in which the library can participate and disseminating information on these events to appropriate staff.
- Provide advice and feedback to the Smathers Public Information Officer and the Web Manager.
- Suggest and develop new ways to communicate with library users and potential users.
- Assist with the @ Your Library marketing campaign and other public information activities.
- Serve as a liaison between the Committee and their departments or divisions.

Recommendations

Pursuant to our charge and our investigation into the possible avenues for communicating the availability of library services and improving the image of the libraries, the Committee is making five recommendations.

Improve the libraries' image and increase library awareness by pursuing additional outreach opportunities and encouraging and facilitating the participation of library staff in a wider range of university events.

While compiling a list of university and community events compared to current outreach activities [attached], the committee found that the library is not taking advantage of many possible outreach opportunities. Some of the possible events require a budget component that currently makes them infeasible. For other events, participation has been haphazard, often contingent on the voluntary actions of a single staff member rather than a library-wide plan and policy. Library participation in more events will increase library awareness and improve our image as an approachable open organization.

Create and adopt a marketing plan for the library.

The library does not have a cohesive and comprehensive plan to increase user awareness of our services and collections or to proactively project a planned positive image to the university community. The library should adopt a marketing plan with goals and objectives. A sample plan created by the Committee is attached.

Conduct an annual evaluation of the libraries' image, outreach activities, and services.

Currently, the outreach librarian, the instruction librarians, the public information officer, the web manager, and individual librarians and staff in the various departments and branches typically conduct outreach activities within their own areas. These individuals often receive feedback that they use to improve the services, instruction, etc. Very little of this data seems to be collected on a library-wide basis. Hence, it is sometimes difficult to discern any library-wide patterns concerning service problems. A library-wide group could gather feedback data from the departments and units, compile and analyze it, and discern library-wide patterns. This group should collaborate with the Strategic Planning and Management Committee.

Create a budget for marketing and outreach activities.

Outreach and marketing should be ongoing activities. The known availability of funds would allow wider participation in events and a more measured and consistent approach to non-traditional outreach activities such as bus signs, receptions, or book events. A sample outreach budget is attached. The committee would create an annual marketing budget to be managed by the Smathers Public Information Officer.

Expand the charge of this Committee or create a new standing committee.

The Committee will:

- Investigate new outreach opportunities
- Communicate these outreach opportunities to appropriate stakeholders
- Finalize and implement a library-wide marketing plan
- Evaluate and revise the marketing plan annually
- Annually reevaluate the libraries' image
- Create an annual marketing budget
- Report the Committee's findings annually to Library Council

Library Marketing Plan

Plan Overview

The mission of the George A. Smathers Libraries is to support the information needs of the University of Florida community, serving as a catalyst for research and discovery. This mission cannot be accomplished if UF students, faculty, and staff are unaware of the services and resources that we offer. Over the course of the next year the Communication with Users Committee will organize special events, publicity materials, and service goals to market the library's resources. This plan will outline these activities.

Internal Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

Staff: Our staff is knowledgeable and educated. Often we receive complements on how helpful our staff is to faculty and students.

Patrons: We have well-defined target audiences in our faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students. We have an established relationship with the greater Florida community.

Presence: We have a strong physical presence on campus with our new main library and the six branch libraries on campus in addition to our law library and the Health Science Center Library. We are the largest library in the state of Florida, and we also have a strong virtual presence in place as well.

Administrative Support: As an example of the administrative support for marketing, we have existing public information resources available to us via our Public Information Officer and the Communication With Users Committee.

Resources: We have incredible resources available to us in our campus connections and relationships, our national and regional affiliations, and the plethora of resources available on a campus this size. In addition, we already have a strong bibliographic instruction program and an active outreach program in place.

Weaknesses

Staff: Staff is perceived as unapproachable, not readily available, arrogant or unhelpful. Also our staff is not easily recognizable and when they are approached they may use too much jargon, give misinformation accidentally, or just not know some of the technical answers that students using our technological resources need. There have been complaints that the communication between staff and professors is lacking as well.

Patrons: Use of the library is low compared to the potential. Students and faculty seem to be unaware of many of our available services and resources.

Communication: Library signage is negative in tone and inconsistent throughout the branches. We do not take advantage of opportunities to promote the libraries and maintain a belief that the patrons will come to us. Our internal information structure is perceived as inadequate.

Resources: Available computer resources – software and hardware – and policies governing computer use are inconsistent across the library system. We have a very limited budget for marketing, and marketing is not perceived as a necessary job function in much of the staff.

Challenges and Barriers

Staff: Internal resistance to marketing efforts. *Resolution: Illustrate staff benefits that will result from marketing. Reward staff that exhibit positive customer service behaviors. Seek proactive customer service skills in new hires.*

Patrons: Reluctance to change current use patterns on the part of faculty and students. *Resolution: Work for higher visibility, emphasize approachability, and institute more proactive communication. Demonstrate a greater openness to participation in cultural and community-wide events.*

Communication: The size of the university creates a lot of competition for advertising space and time and we have limited means for contacting target groups. *Resolution: Come up with creative alternatives for advertising outlets.*

Presence: Maintaining the virtual presence in an updated format takes continuous time and effort. With an ever-changing faculty and student base we must institute a continuous marketing program that is continually updated. *Resolution: Make this a priority.*

Administrative Support: Inherent library and university bureaucracy. *Resolution: Support efforts towards better communication.*

Resources: We have a very limited budget for marketing, and marketing is not perceived as a necessary job function in much of the staff. *Resolution: Recharge this committee as a committee with both a budget and the power to implement some of the recommendations within this plan.*

Targeted Market Segments

- Faculty
- Graduate Students
- Undergraduate Students
- Staff
- Community

Survey Methods

- LIBQUAL+ survey
- Library generated web surveys
- Focus groups
- Feedback via the web

Goals and Objectives

- 1) Establish an overall clear and positive image of the libraries in the university community.
 1. Contact new faculty
 2. Create a library orientation program for faculty to be held each fall semester
 3. Continue library orientation programs for all students
 4. Assess library publications for professional image and quality

- 2) Increase awareness in the university community of the scope of the Library's services.
 1. Create a list of communication outlets available to university organizations
 2. Create and maintain a calendar of relevant events
 3. Participate in all relevant events
 4. Sponsor special library events

- 3) Build an internal marketing culture within the Library.
 1. Facilitate discussions for staff on marketing and public image
 2. Create a marketing and public image resource packet for staff

- 4) Provide a framework to ensure consistency in the Library's communications.
 1. Create an online template for instructional handouts
 2. Create and promote an information resource for public outreach
 3. Create an available staff bulletin board in each staff lounge for internal communication.

- 5) Perform an annual evaluation of the Library's images and services.
 1. Review relevant aspects of LibQUAL each fall
 2. Conduct annual focus groups for all user groups
 3. Compile and review statistics of outreach programs
 4. Establish a more visible system to elicit user comments and suggestions
 5. Compile and review comments from users

Action Plan

See attached Current Outreach Programs and Recommended Outreach Opportunities tables.

Budget

See attached proposed budget.

Current Outreach Programs

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DETAILS</u>	<u>CONTACT PERSON</u>	<u>TARGET</u>	<u>Goal(s)</u>
Electronic Libraries Orientation	Three open sessions for students, faculty, and staff to learn about using the libraries' electronic resources	Marina Salcedo	Faculty, Staff, Graduate and Undergraduate Students	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 5.3
General Libraries Orientation	Three open sessions for students, faculty, and staff to learn about using the libraries.	Marina Salcedo	Faculty, Staff, Graduate and Undergraduate Students	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 5.3
Graduate Student Orientations	Three open sessions for graduate students to learn about library resources.	Shelley Arlen	Graduate	1.3, 5.3
Hispanic, Asian, and Black Student Assemblies	Library representative(s) promote library services and materials to student groups.	Marina Salcedo	Undergraduate, Graduate	1.3, 2.3, 5.3
Information Station	Our Information Station which visits various locations on campus to answer student questions and promote library services	Marina Salcedo	Faculty, Staff, Graduate and Undergraduate Students	1.1, 5.3
Information Technology Symposium	Library representative(s) promote library services and materials to attendees of the Information Technology Symposium.	Carol Turner	Faculty, Staff, Graduate and Undergraduate Students	1.1, 2.3
Internationalization Seminar	Library representative(s) promote library's international resources to attendees.	Chelsea Dinsmore	Faculty	1.1, 2.3
Preview	Library representative(s) promote library services and materials to incoming freshman at Preview sessions.	Marina Salcedo	Undergraduate Students	1.3, 2.3
READ Posters	Posters of campus and community members posing with a book of their choice to promote reading and the UF libraries. Placed in strategic locations around campus.	Barbara Hood	All	1.1, 1.4
Read-A-Thon	Annual event where guest readers from campus and the greater Gainesville community read on the Plaza of the Americas in celebration of National Library Week	Barbara Hood	All	1.1, 2.4
Special Collection Events	A variety of events put on by the Special Collections department to highlight various collections for both campus and community members.	Robert Shaddy	All	1.1, 2.4, 5.3
UF Sponsored New Faculty Orientation	Library representative promote library services to faculty, emphasizing library liaisons and support services.	Carol Turner	Faculty	1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 5.3
UF Sponsored Transfer Student Orientation	Library representatives attend the UF sponsored orientation to promote library services to transfer students.	Marina Salcedo	Undergraduate	1.3, 2.3, 5.3

Recommended Outreach Opportunities

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>DETAILS</u>	<u>TARGET</u>	<u>Goal(s)</u>
Bus signs	Posters on RTS buses featuring information about library services or events.	All	1.4
Faculty Author Reception	Formal reception for recently published faculty.	Faculty	1.1, 2.4, 5.3
Library Sponsored Annual Faculty Orientation	Special invitation to faculty inviting them to come meet their library liaisons and learn more about library resources	Faculty	1.1, 1.2, 5.3
Table Tents	Tents signs in libraries and possibly other venues notifying featuring information about library services or events.	Faculty, Staff, Graduate and Undergraduate Students	1.1, 1.4
Traveling Exhibits	Many programs are available and are easy to apply for. For example, the <u>Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature Exhibit</u> which is sponsored by the ALA.	All	1.1, 5.3
Create a list of communication outlets available		Staff	2.1
Create and maintain a calendar of relevant events		Staff	2.2
Facilitate discussions for staff on marketing and public image		Staff	3.1
Create a marketing and public image resource packet for staff		Staff	2.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2
Create an online template for instructional handouts		Staff	1.4, 4.1
Create and promote an information resource for public outreach		Staff	2.1, 2.2, 4.2
Create an available staff bulletin board in each staff lounge for internal communication		Staff	3.1, 4.3
Review relevant aspects of LibQUAL each fall		Staff	5.1, 5.3
Conduct annual focus groups for all user groups		All	3.1, 5.2, 5.3
Compile and review statistics of outreach programs		Staff	5.3
Establish a more visible system to elicit user comments and suggestions		All	5.4, 5.3, 5.5
Compile and review comments from users.		Staff	5.1, 5.3, 5.5

**Proposed budget for external spending for 2005-2006
marketing and public relations materials using library funds**

(excludes Foundation funds used for Howe Society, Development and Special Collections events and does not include Library West reopening events)

	Estimated cost
Printed publications	
Library News (printed four times/year)	\$5,300
Research Any Time, Anywhere brochure (10,000)	\$ 900
Getting Started @ your library (5,000)	\$1,800
Students in focus groups requested a brochure describing each library and collection with locations and map (this could possibly be combined with Getting Started brochure into one larger one)	\$1,800
In-house plotter printing (for poster sessions, READ posters, Special Collection wall posters and signs, Read-A-Thon posters, etc.)	\$2,500
Additional misc. printing	\$2,000
Bus signs	
(Art has been paid for)	
Run for one month beginning and end of fall and spring semesters	\$2,000
Reception food and supplies	
\$175 per reception x 3 (two faculty author receptions and one possible additional reception)	\$ 525
\$100 per Jewish Studies book discussion group (x5)	500
Promotional giveaway materials	
5,000 pencils	\$ 600
2,000 magnets	\$ 320
1,000 post-it note pads	\$ 450
500 pens	\$ 460
10,000 Rainy day bags (5,500 still in stock)	\$2,000
Other misc. items	\$ 500
Portable Tabletop Display Board	\$ 400
Ads	
Three ½ page ads in Alligator	\$2,550
Read-A-Thon	
Food/beverages for readers and listeners	\$ 500
Camera equipment	
Professional lights so we can begin shooting video news again, make new virtual tour of Lib West and update others; also needed for product shots and portraits, etc. (We hope to set up a small studio space in new Lib West)	\$ 600
Tripod	\$ 100
Misc. camera equipment	\$ 50
TOTAL	\$25,855