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Personal Librarian Assessment Report 2018_2020

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USFSP New Transfer Students Personal Librarian Program
Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Fall 2018 – Spring 2020 Report

By Camielle Crampsie

Objectives

In Fall 2018, the Research & Instruction department in the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library started a Personal Librarian program targeting new transfer students to let them know about various library services, programs, and events. New transfer students were specifically selected to provide increased outreach and academic support in order to improve their retention and graduation rates. This program was designed to give students a personalized and direct link to the library through an assigned liaison librarian. This personal librarian would ideally become a familiar and comfortable link to help students find resources for assignments and research papers and answer questions about using the wide range of resources and services available through the library.

The Program

The Personal Librarian program was implemented in the Fall and Spring semesters. Emails to new USF St. Petersburg Transfer students were sent on a monthly basis three times during the semester. Through the email service Constant Contact, lists of students were created and matched to each liaison librarian. In the beginning of the semester (January/September) an introductory email was sent out from the liaison librarian explaining the program and providing contact information. Midway through the semester (March/October) a second email went out to check in with the students and with information about library resources and upcoming events. Another email was sent near the end of the semester (April/November) encouraging students to reach out to their librarians if they need assistance as finals approached and to let students know about study spaces and opportunities for them during finals at the library.

All emails were designed to be short, informal, informative listing 3 library services, and include pictures of the librarian or library events. Each email also included some sort of light hearted interactive survey or event invite. Meet and Greet sessions were held for transfer students to meet their personal librarians. Refreshments and free giveaways were available for students. These took place in the Fall 2018, Spring 2019, and Fall 2019 semesters.

Methodology:

Our assessment comes through several data sources

1. Constant Contact email metrics. These included usage statistics on how many students opened the emails and clicked through to the links included in the message,
2. The Library Service Desk Statistics Form was used to put a question in to track any questions that came from students in the Personal Librarian Program, and
3. An initial survey asking students about how prepared and comfortable they felt within regards to the upcoming semester and a final program satisfaction survey sent in the final email. This survey also asked for feedback on how to improve the program for the future

Results

A total of **1,728** transfer students were contacted from Fall 2018 to Spring 2020.

Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020
491*	392	572*	273

*Fall semester included new transfer students that started either during the summer or the fall semester

The average email open rate was **37%** with students opening the emails more in the beginning of the semester. Of those opened, there was an average click rate of **3%**. More specifically however, the transfer students opened the 1st September / January emails (**43%**) significantly more than those of the October /March (**33%**) and November / April (**35%**) emails. This same pattern was also true for the embedded link click through rates.

One notable exception was the personal librarian email send out at the end of April 2020. This email went out shortly after the university went to remote learning and the library closed due to the Coronavirus. As you can see from the table below, the email open rate increased to 45% and the click through rate increased to 6%. The information in this email reflected the current situation and highlighted online resources instead of study spaces in the library.

Fall 2018			Spring 2019			Fall 2019			Spring 2020		
	Open	Click		Open	Click		Open	Click		Open	Click
Sep	45%	8%	Jan	44%	7%	Sep	39%	2%	Jan	45%	10%
Oct	29%	0.5%	Mar	36%	0.5%	Oct	37%	1%	Mar	31%	0%
Nov	29%	0.5%	Apr	34%	2%	Nov	34%	2%	Apr	45%	6%
Total	34%	3%	Total	38%	3%	Total	37%	2%	Total	40%	5%

In the Fall of 2018, 13 students attended the Meet and Greet event for transfer students in the beginning of the semester. In the Spring of 2019 no one attended, but it was also held later in the semester this time. At the Fall 2019 Transfer Student Meet and Greet only 2 students attended, but both were also international students. This event happened later in the semester again, but it was held in October during the National Transfer Week Student and in partnership with the USFSP Transfer Advisory Committee. Due to low attendance in the past no event was held in the Spring of 2020.

Only 2 students reported being a part of the Personal Librarian Program through the Service Desk Statistics Form in the Fall 2018/ Spring 2019. Whether this low result was due to lack of participation in the program or lack of thorough data collection, we are unsure. That said, unless students were specifically asked whether they had and read an email as part of personal librarian program, they were unlikely to mention this at the library's front service desk. Due to such low reporting the question was taken off the Fall 2019/Spring 2020 reference statistics form.

Twenty-four students responded to the start of the semester survey; 26% reported feeling excited and prepared for their classes and assignments, 33% felt calm and in control, 33% were nervous about their assignments, and 8% were already feeling overwhelmed. Only three students filled out the satisfaction survey that was sent out at the end of the semester. Two students reported using at least one of the library tips they received in the emails, the other student report that although they did not use any it was good information to know. Two of the three students felt like the amount of communication was not enough, one student commented wanting more frequent emails. Two of the three students reported that the program had a positive impact on their academic work, connected them with the USFSP community, they are likely to reach out in the future to their librarian for help, and they would recommend library services to their peers.

Response to Findings:

The Nelson Poynter Memorial Library will continue the Personal Librarian Program for new transfer students. Now that the program is all set up with draft email text and an established way of dissemination, it has become an easy way to reach a critical population at the university. Furthermore, when the university closed due to the Coronavirus, the email on remote library services was widely read and critical to inform students about altered library operations. In response to this assessment, however, we will re-examine the text in the first September / January emails to include the most important information for students; as this email was the most consistently opened, programmatic priorities should be included here. Due to the low response to the end of the semester survey, more effort will be made to try and elicit student feedback; what we received was positive but not necessarily representative. Additionally, we will continue to explore other opportunities to meet face to face with students, whether through virtual events as social distancing prevails or in-person when safety permits. Scheduling this event very early in the semester was successful and generated good attendance or else partnering with the Student Transfer Student Advocates as a means of cross promoting the library's event is something to be considered.