Creating a Successful Single Service Point for Circulation and Reference in an Academic Library

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Topics to Cover

• Background
• Planning
• Implementation
• Marketing
• Assessment
• External and internal benefits
• What’s next
Let’s Go Back in Time...
Welcome to Willis Library First Floor

Spring 2011
Multiple Service Desk Issues

- Confusion for patrons
- Patrons sent from desk to desk for assistance
- Staffing costs
- Communication and management issues
- Missed opportunities
- More students: 36,000
Circulation, ILL and Reference in Spring 2011

- Three separate departments
Circulation, ILL and Reference in Summer 2011

Public Services = Better Communication
Circulation and ILL in Fall 2011

- Creation of the Access Services Department
Summer 2012

Welcome to Willis Library First Floor
The Combined Service Desk
Main problem with existing desk
Planning

- Goals
- Naming the Desk
- Services
- Staff Concerns
- Staffing
- Training
- Hours of Operation
Goals for Creating a Combined Service Desk

- One single service point for checkout, paying fines, reference assistance, ILL
- Increased cross training opportunities for staff
- Cost savings on student assistant expenditures
- Circulation and ILL staff members have more time for projects related to improving services, workflow efficiencies
- Reference librarians have more time for liaison work and academic research projects
- Increased communication avenues for Reference and Circulation
Possible Names for the Service Desk

- Ask Us Desk
- Patron Services Desk
- Patron Assistance Desk
- Library Services Desk
Services to Offer

- Checkout
- Reserves
- Fines
- Library Cards
- Graduate Carrels
- ILL
- Reference
Staff Concerns

• Reference
  ◦ Quality of reference services
  ◦ How much Circulation training will we need
  ◦ Will there be an on-call service
  ◦ We will need to work closely with Circulation

• Access Services
  ◦ Quality of circulation services
  ◦ How much Reference training will we need
  ◦ Will there be a reference person at all hours the desk is open
  ◦ We will need to work closely with Reference
Staffing the Desk

- Four seats at the service desk
- Full time staff (10) and student assistants (11) = AS desk staff
- Graduate students (6) and two librarians (2) = Reference desk staff
- Desk schedules set by the semester
- On-call librarian service using walkie talkies
- Office next to the desk available for in depth reference
- Bell when additional AS assistance is needed
- Cross trained shelvers
Training

- Basic training checklists
- Defining skill sets
- Access Services staff: basic reference training
- Reference staff: basic circulation training
Reference training for AS Staff

- Catalog searching tips
  - Keyword vs. Subject searching
- How to use electronic databases
- How to search UNT Digital Collections
- How to find subject and class page LibGuides
- Who are the Liaison Librarians
  - How to find a liaison librarian (guide)
  - Reference by appointment
- How to use on-call reference assistance
- RefStats
Access Services Training for Reference Staff

- Circulation policies and procedures
  - Sierra training
  - Checking out books/reserves

- ILL policies and procedures
  - ILLiad training
  - Checking out ILL materials

- Ref Stats Circulation training
Hours of Operation

- Library Services Desk
  - Sunday: 1p-midnight
  - Monday-Thursday: 8am-midnight
  - Friday: 9a-6pm
  - Saturday: closed

- Reference Staffing
  - Sunday-Thursday: until 10pm
  - Friday: until 6pm

- Willis Library
  - Open 24/7
  - Self Checkout Machine
Implementation

- Set up three training sessions for Reference and Access Services staff
- Worked with Library Facilities to eliminate other service desks
- Began combined service desk in summer
- Reallocated student assistants
- Continued meeting with department managers
- Requested ongoing feedback from staff
Marketing

- Began marketing campaign in Fall 2012
  - Library’s website
  - Signage on the first floor
  - Student Government Association
  - Graduate Student Council
  - Faculty Senate
  - Library Liaisons
  - Library’s Facebook page
In House Assessment

- Department meetings with Reference and Access Services staff members
- Surveyed student assistants from both departments
- Fall 2012 first semester week
  - 1867 patrons at the service desk
Cost Savings

Cost Savings - Student Assistant Expenditures

- Circulation
- ILL
- Stacks Management

2010/11
2011/12
2012/13 (Projected)
Number of Student Assistants

![Bar graph showing the number of Circulation Student Assistants for the years 2010/11, 2011/12, and 2012/13. The graph indicates a significant increase in the number of assistants from 2010/11 to 2012/13.]}
What has been working?

- Reference and AS staff learning from each other as they help patrons at the desk
- Proximity of reference staff enables reference questions to be answered more quickly
- Easy to call for assistance
- Expanded training for student assistants has freed up full time staff
- Good communication between managers and staff
- Patrons like the single service point
Benefits-Internal

- Easier to help patrons
- Frequent communication between departments
- Better appreciation of what each department does
- Better trained staff, on the job mentoring
- Positive and welcoming service desk environment for staff
- Desk coverage is better
Benefits-Internal cont’d

- Student assistant expenditures reduced
- Librarians have more time to devote to faculty and students
- Access Services staff able to streamline and evaluate services since they are not tied to the desk
- More student assistants interested in library science
Benefits-External

• Public Services are more cohesive
• Better service for patrons
• Positive and welcoming service desk environment for patrons
• More embedded librarians in classrooms and buildings
• More library instruction courses
• More services: faculty delivery, expanded document delivery, online holds, food for fines
Improvements we needed to make

• Needed a dual monitor at the reference computer
• Develop a core competencies training list
• Have on-call librarians stop by the desk at beginning of their shifts
• Needed a new desk
Problem with existing desk
Now patrons can see the desk!
Where do we go from here?

- More cross training
- More assessment from patrons
- Create new services
Questions?

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