COMMUNICATION ON THE FRONT LINES:

BUILDING RELATIONS BETWEEN ACCESS SERVICES AND RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTION SERVICES

ELIZABETH MARCUS & MALTI TURNBULL, WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
WHY IS COMMUNICATION IMPORTANT?

• To efficiently serve the patrons

• Organization of academic libraries more complex

• Collaborative efforts inside and outside the library have increased.

• Builds rapport between co-workers
WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF POOR COMMUNICATION?

• Lack of Trust: We think they are the problem, they think we are

• Lack of awareness about the functions and value of the other department

• Competition for fiscal resources
RESULTS OF POOR COMMUNICATION

• Misinformed patrons or co-workers
• Gossip
• Low morale
COMMUNICATION @ YOUR LIBRARY

Kahoot!

SURVEY

Go to kahoot.it and enter the game PIN listed on the screen
WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

- Regional Comprehensive University
- Fall 2016 Enrollment-10,805 students

HUNTER LIBRARY

- 50 Employees
- 3 Library Units- TASC, RIS, & COM
- Separate Circulation and Reference Desks
PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

• Department Head Meetings
• Brainfood Workshops
• Friday News Blog Posts
PUBLIC SERVICES COMMUNICATION SURVEY

• Qualtrics survey of 9 questions
• Emailed to 22 employees
• Focused on communication quality and collegiality
• Combination of multiple choice and open response questions
SURVEY RESULTS

• 13 responses-
  ✓ Almost equal representation from Access Services and RIS
HOW OFTEN DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES OUTSIDE YOUR UNIT?

- Every Day
- 2-3 Times a Week
- Once a Week
- Once a Month
- Once a Year
HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH POLICIES, SERVICES, AND WORKFLOWS OF THE OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES UNIT?

- Extremely Familiar
- Very Familiar
- Moderately Familiar
- Slightly Familiar
- Not Familiar
HOW WELL DO YOU THINK HUNTER LIBRARY’S PUBLIC SERVICE UNITS COMMUNICATE IN THESE AREAS?

Extremely Well

Very Well

Moderately Well

Slightly Well

Not Well

New Services/Policies

Services/Policy Changes

Patron Information/Issues

Personnel Duty Changes

Department Projects
COMMON THOUGHTS ABOUT COMMUNICATION

• Major policy/service information is being shared.

• Other information is only shared between individuals from each unit involved in specific projects or not at all.

• We are busy and forget the other unit may need the information.

• It is hard to keep track of all changes. You can't remember everything.
IN WHAT AREAS WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT ACCESS SERVICES/RIS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific Job Duties</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Job Duties</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Departmental Issues/Challenges</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workflow Information</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Projects</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm Satisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE LEVEL OF COLLEGIALITY BETWEEN PUBLIC SERVICE UNITS?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Terrible
COMMON THOUGHTS ABOUT COLLEGIALITY

• Our units generally work well together, with shared goals of serving patrons and the university always in mind.

• Lack of communication isn’t necessarily reflection of lack of collegiality.

• Hunter’s workplace culture can be serious and focus is on getting individual work done. Some people keep to themselves. Difference in employee status (faculty/staff) may contribute to some of the distance as well.

• There aren’t many formal opportunities to work together/socialize. Folks have mixed feelings about this being a good or bad thing.
COMMUNICATION IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS

- More cross-training opportunities

- Regular email/SharePoint/meeting update from each unit
  - Access Services could share specific information, separate from the TASC news blog

- An organizational responsibilities chart for each unit

- Activities/efforts to bridge the faculty/staff divide

- Informal information sessions w/food to share what we do
COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

• 16 attendees
• Survey trends
• Kahoot quizzes about each unit
• Group discussion with question prompts
• Tips for improved communication
• Food!!
• What would you consider to be your greatest accomplishment at Hunter Library?

• What book are you reading currently?

• What job responsibility do you have that others may not know about?

• What is currently your biggest challenge at work?

• What professional development event would you like to attend (if money and time were no object)?
HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

• Be friendly and smile!

• Give others the benefit of the doubt

• Avoid labeling/stereotyping individuals/depts.

• Take initiative to share information

• Be aware of others’ schedules, responsibilities, and struggles

• Never assume!
RESOURCES LIST


All photos were retrieved through the Creative Commons website.
THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

Elizabeth Marcus
Undergraduate Experience Librarian
828-227-3398
emarcus@wcu.edu

Malti Turnbull
University Library Technician
828-227-3875
turnbull@email.wcu.edu