Access & Engagement Unit, Academic Year 2024-25

Overview:

The Access & Engagement Unit encompasses Access Services and Reference Services. Within each of these areas, supporting our patrons and forming connections with them is crucial. In Access Services in the Main Library and Gary Strong Curriculum Center (GSCC), we seek to "connect [in-person and virtual U of I affiliate and community members] to library resources," course reserves, spaces, and technology.[1] In Reference Services, we seek to "assist, advise, and instruct [in-person and virtual U of I affiliates and community members]" in finding, accessing, and evaluating information related to their information and research needs.[2] The work of this unit occurs synchronously and asynchronously.

Library KPIs:

- Primary Responsibility
    - Building Usage
    - Course Reserves
    - Research and Reference Assistance
- Relevant
    - Online Catalog
    - Physical Circulation
    - Student Savings

Fall 2024 Metrics: AccessEngagementUnit-Metrics_2024-Fall.xlsx
Longitudinal Reference Metrics: ReferenceMetrics_Longitudinal.xlsx
Fall 2024 List of Reference Model Options: 2024 Reference Model Options.docx
Fall 2024 Mending Tracking: Mending Fall 2024.xlsx
Binder Project Tracking: Binder Project Tracking.xlsx
Fall 2024 Main Library Access Services Desk Count: Desk Count Fall 2024.xlsx

Objectives (includes timebound goals and projects):

Facilitate physical and electronic Course Reserves

- **Why:**
    - Save students money and increase access to required and recommended course materials
- **How:**
    - Support faculty and instructors in their use of Course Reserves
    - Ensure that website information is kept up-to-date
    - Collaborate with the Open Strategies Team to advertise Course Reserves services
    - Seek feedback from the campus community
- **Success looks like:**
    - Continued or increased usage of Course Reserves by faculty and instructors
    - Positive interactions with faculty and instructors
    - Continued cost-savings for students
- **Fall update (8/19/2024 - 12/31/2024)**
    - 89 instructors (excluding those teaching ENGL 101/102 and MATH 170/175/275) across 103 courses and 40 subjects utilized Course Reserves for required and/or

recommended readings in fall 2024. These courses served approximately 6,969 enrolled students and in total, physical course reserves circulated 107 times, Controlled Digital Lending items were viewed 4,646 times, and four additional ebook licenses were purchased based on turnaway notifications. We estimate that Course Reserves saved enrolled students over $474,000 on the purchase of required and recommended physical items across all courses utilizing this service. Cost-savings by discipline ranged from $718.40 across all Biological Engineering courses to $83,109.90 across all English courses, with the average cost-savings by discipline equaling $11,871.56. These data are affected by the number of courses utilizing course reserves, within each discipline, and the number of students enrolled in these courses. Estimated cost-savings of items on Course Reserves, by all discipline is available in Sheet 2 of the Fall 2024 metrics spreadsheet. This is the first year that we've gathered data on all courses using Course Reserves, instead of just courses who utilize this service for required readings. As such, a comparison between fall 2024 and AY 2023 – 2024 data is not feasible. However, current usage of Course Reserves by instructors as well as the number of circulations and views of items on Course Reserves appears to indicate that the Library is filling a need on campus. Data gathered for future reports will allow us to more clearly identify if usage continues or increases over time.

Review and maintain physical collection stacks

- **Why:**
  - Save patron time
  - Increase usability of physical collection stacks
  - Reduce patron confusion
- **How:**
  - Shelve returned and new items in a timely manner
  - Conduct ongoing review of physical collection stacks for accuracy, damage, cleanliness, and order
- **Sucess looks like:**
  - Reduction in un-loaned items labelled as missing
  - Orderly and accurate physical collection stacks
- **Fall update (8/19/2024 - 12/31/2024)**
  - Main Library Access Services continued their review of physical collection stacks, reviewing the A-G call number ranges. During their review, they identified more than 500 missing/lost items, 20 mis-shelved items, 8 items with call number issues, and 134 items not in Alma. Throughout the course of the semester, they pulled 296 items for mending and 602 duplicate items for review by subject librarians. They also identified 686 un-loaned items as missing. This time-consuming collection maintenance work ensures that patrons are able to find what they need when they visit our stacks. In Fall 2024, the Gary Strong Curriculum Center (GSCC) added 696 items to their collection and removed/deleted 819 items. Again, this work ensures that our collections are usable and relevant for our patrons.

Provide relevant and timely point-of-need Reference and Circulation services

- **Why:**
    - Ensure that Access & Engagement service points reflect the current needs of patrons
- **How:**
    - Track and analyze point-of-need service point interactions
    - Track and analyze data on hold requests
    - Seek feedback from the campus community
- **Success looks like:**
    - Positive interactions with patrons
    - Monitoring usage of point-of-need Reference and Circulation services and making recommendations based on data
    - Completing IDOC resident students' 'Requests For More Sources' within one week of receipt
    - Filling hold requests for physical items (held by U of I Library) in timely manner
- **Fall update (8/19/2024 - 12/31/2024)**
    - Reference, Main Library Access Services, and GSCC employees staffed their service points at various hours throughout the semester. In Fall 2024, Reference received 1,691 questions (a 2.2% increase when compared to Fall 2023) and the GSCC received 380 questions (a 55% increase when compared to Fall 2023). In Fall 2024, 68% of reference questions were classified as READ level 2 or higher, while only 54% were classified similarly in Fall 2023. Main Library Access Services continued to utilize LibAnswers to track questions and began a basic desk count in late October, reporting more than 2,000 interactions with patrons. These data are currently being used to inform schedules and service models, with both Reference and the GSCC considering changes to their hours in future semesters. In fall 2024, the Reference Coordinator, Access Services Manager, and Unit Head also began discussing cross-training Access Services students on known-item reference assistance. So far, we've surveyed students about their knowledge and experience answering reference questions and met to discuss our goals for training. An initial training is planned for February 2025 and will include Main Library and GSCC Access Services student employees, with the goal of holding smaller/shorter check-in trainings in the future. Four IDOC requests were received in fall 2024, with librarians completing these requests within 2.5 days, on average, and the entire request being completed within 9 days. Hold requests for physical items were filled at a consistently fast rate, with the time between request submission and placement on the hold shelf averaging 30.9 hours, or 1.2 days (this data is available in Alma Analytics/Shared Folders/University of Idaho/Reports/Access and Engagement/AverageTime-HoldsProcessed).

Provide timely access to the Main Library and Gary Strong Curriculum Center (GSCC)

- **Why:**
    - Ensure that Main Library and GSCC building hours reflect the current needs of patrons

- **How:**
  - Gather and analyze gate count data
  - Analyze space usage gathered by other Units/Teams
  - Seek feedback from the campus community
- **Success looks like:**
  - Continued or increased usage of the Main Library and GSCC during open hours
- **Fall update (8/19/2024 - 12/31/2024)**
  - Between August 2024 and December 2024, the Main Library gate count reported more than 122,527 visitors, a 7% decrease when compared to Fall 2023. However, these numbers are lower than expected as the gate counter malfunctioned and stopped counting at various times throughout the semester. Even with these issues, data do indicate an 11% increase in footfalls in October 2024 when compared to October 2023. The GSCC also had consistently high usage with a total of 1,283 visitors, with more than 700 footfalls in September 2024 alone. Space tracking undertaken by Main Library Access Services also indicates consistently high usage of the Library's open and reservable spaces. Data collection last year was inconsistent so a comparison is not feasible, but data from Fall 2024 indicate that first-floor open spaces averaged more than 4,000 users per month, with October being the busiest month. The open and reservable group study rooms on the first, third, and fourth floors averaged 105 users per month, while the reservable individual study rooms averaged 34 users per month. Although a few study carrels were used frequently, overall, these spaces showed limited use, with occupants identified as using these spaces only approximately 7 times per month, on average.

Timebound: Investigate new reference model options
- **Why:**
  - Ensure that the reference model used meet the needs of patrons based on point-of-need interaction data
- **How:**
  - Review reference models at other academic libraries
  - Review point-of-need reference interactions
  - Discuss model options with Reference group and Library leadership
- **Success looks like:**
  - By the end of the year, develop a list of reference model options, with pros and cons for each option, and a recommendation for AY 2025 – 2026
- **Fall update (8/19/2024 - 12/31/2024)**
  - Reference librarians generated a list of three reference models with pros and cons for each option. These were shared with the Dean of Libraries and Associate Dean of Operations and Access.

Unit/Team Metrics:
- Objective 1: Facilitate physical and electronic Course Reserves
  - # of courses using course reserves

- o # of faculty/instructors using Course Reserves
- o # of students enrolled in courses using Course Reserves
- o # of times course reserves items circulated or were viewed (Controlled Digital Lending items)
- o # of additional ebook licenses for Course Reserves items requested and purchased during the semester (based on turnaway notifications)
- o Estimated cost-savings of items on Course Reserves, by course discipline and semester
- o Feedback from campus community
- Objective 2: Review and maintain physical collection stacks
  - o Call number ranges reviewed
  - o # of physical items pulled for mending
  - o # of duplicates and older editions pulled for review by subject librarians
  - o # of physical items not in Alma, with call number issues, mis-shelved, labelled missing/lost
  - o # of new and returned items
  - o # of shelving assignments completed
  - o # of un-loaned items labelled as missing
  - o Data from other projects involving physical items
- Objective 3: Provide relevant and timely point-of-need Reference and Circulation services
  - o # of service point interactions by location, READ level, mode, etc.
  - o # of IDOC requests received and completed, by timeframe
  - o # of hold requests for physical items held by the U of I Library
  - o Time between request submission and placement on hold shelf
  - o Feedback from campus community
- Objective 4: Provide timely access to the Main Library and Gary Strong Curriculum Center (GSCC)
  - o Gate counts
  - o Space usage gathered by other Units/Teams
  - o Feedback from campus community
- Objective 5: Timebound: Investigate new reference model options
  - o List of reference model options, with pros and cons for each option, and a recommendation for AY 2025 – 2026

Membership:
- Jylisa Kenyon (lead)
- Suzie Davis
- Aarika Dobbins
- Hanwen Dong
- Haley Hunter
- Victoria Kerr
- Pam Martin
- Alisa Melior
- Kelly Omodt
- Diane Prorak
- Tyler Rodrigues
- Rochelle Smith

Reporting to:
- Jylisa Kenyon (Unit Head)
- Rami Attebury (Associate Dean, Operations & Access)

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[1] Warren, B., Armstrong, D., Boucher, A., Harper, J., Pierard, C., Thoulag, J., & Ketchum, D. (2020). *A framework for access services librarianship: An initiative sponsored by the association of college and research libraries' access services interest group* [Report]. Association of College and Research Libraries. https://alair.ala.org/handle/11213/17206

[2] Huling, N., Dallas, L. J., Kinder, R., Whitlatch, J. B., & Woodard, B. (2017, September 17). *Professional competencies for reference and user services librarians*. Reference & User Services Association (RUSA). https://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/professional