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Using Evidence in Practice

A Comeback Library: Re-establishing a Library Presence in a Diverse Regional Campus

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Setting

This article describes the use of evidence to inform the development and growth of library services on a regional campus in the diverse city of Stockton, California. The Stockton Campus Library (SCL) at the Stockton Campus, a regional campus of the California State University (CSU), Stanislaus, serves nearly 12% of the school's 8,847 FTE student population, and serves 20 full-time Stockton based faculty (California State University, Stanislaus [CSU], 2021). CSU Stanislaus is a Hispanic-serving and minority-majority university with ethnic minorities making up 70% of total enrollment and three-fourths of our undergraduates are first-generation students. Out of the Stockton students enrolled in fall 2021, 48% are Hispanic/Latino, 17% are Asian, 8% are Black/African American, and 24% are first-generation students (CSU, Stanislaus, 2021).

The SCL strives to offer the same services that are provided at the main campus located in the city of Turlock. The SCL is committed to providing equitable access to all Stanislaus State students, faculty, and staff. The J. Burton Vasché Library at the Turlock campus is a newly renovated building featuring 3 floors, over 380,000 physical books, 19 study rooms, and more than 1,000 study seats. The SCL on the Stockton campus currently occupies a 1,400 sq. ft. suite and offers 300 print books and 56 study seats. The

re-establishment and expansion of the SCL is an ambitious goal, and reaching the current stage is an encouraging accomplishment.

The SCL was established in 1999 after the University formally founded the regional campus in Stockton in 1998. The first Stockton library was named Stockton Library Access Center (LAC) and was allotted a suite of 2,700 sq. ft., funding for a print collection, a full-time staff member, and a librarian. The Stockton LAC flourished for almost a decade, providing full library services to the growing Stockton campus community. The direction of the Stockton campus took a sharp turn when the United States economy was hit by the 2008 housing market crisis. Under the pressure of a sharply reduced budget, the University decided to partially close the Stockton campus. The LAC became primarily a remote service as onsite staff were re-directed to the main campus. In 2012, when the University was attempting to establish self-support programs and a well-situated library space at Stockton, the LAC was moved to an 840 sq. ft. room. It took almost another decade for the University to revisit the potential of the Stockton campus. In 2020, the Stockton Campus Library returned to a 1,400 sq. ft. library suite and opened in person services in fall 2021.

Problem

When the SCL opened in fall 2021, we were under specific safety regulations due to the COVID-19 pandemic which made offering in-person services challenging. However, our goal was to offer equitable access despite these challenges. In describing a post-pandemic future for library services, Dave Shumaker (2021) has explained that “effort to overcome unequal access to information and technology will continue to be a top priority” (p. 15). To offer equal access to virtual and in-person library services that the Turlock campus offers, the SCL, as well as many other university departments, needed additional funding. However, there was a decline in student enrollment throughout the university, at both Turlock and Stockton campuses (CSU, Stanislaus, 2021), which impacted available funding. For the SCL, funding was an issue even before the pandemic. Now as we return to in-person services, SCL is fighting to stay present and to continue expanding while working with limited resources.

To start re-establishing the new space and library, I assessed the design and structure of the library space to better fit the needs of the Stockton students and the services to be implemented. Deciding where elements of a new library space would go prompted anticipated challenges. A complex obstacle for library managers in similar situations, is to “plan for a new or renovated library space,” and determine “how to incorporate as much flexibility as possible,” (p. 410) as Mary Augusta Thomas (2000) explained in her article on redefining library spaces. Flexibility in services and design relies heavily on the needs of the community that the library serves. The challenges for a library re-design and transformation increase when there is a shortage in personnel and funding. Currently, the SCL has one full-time librarian hired in spring 2021, and one full-time library staff hired in spring 2022.

Priorities for the library also align heavily with traditional library services: access to books, study spaces, computers and printing, and research or reference help. A front desk for check-outs and research help was necessary. Study space and computers and printing were other necessities when designing the space. Because the SCL re-opened with no browsable print collection, building a library collection was fundamental as well.

Considering the limited space in the library suite, it was crucial to document the necessary programs and services the library wanted to offer to students. This also meant surveying the Stockton campus

community, preferably those primarily serviced, like students and faculty, and aggregating their responses.

Connecting with the community at Stockton is the foundation to building the library at Stockton and implementing services. After I was hired as the Stockton Campus Librarian, my objective was to build a print collection, since the initial collection was lost after the recession in 2008, and to design services for the opening in fall 2021. A survey was conducted, and students and faculty were invited to participate.

Evidence

Initial Connection with the Campus Community: Surveys

Surveys were created and shared with Stockton faculty in April 2021, and with Stockton students in May 2021, to aid in the planning and implementation of in-person library services for the start of the fall semester in August 2021. Emails were distributed to both parties with a survey deadline included, and an incentive (gift card) was offered to students who completed the survey.

Both faculty and students were offered separate surveys. They were given four weeks to complete the survey, and for the students, to also be considered for the gift card drawing. In total 11 Stockton based faculty and 83 Stockton students participated in the survey. The following were the questions asked in the student survey:

- What is your major? (Text input)
- What is your academic status? (Radio multiple choice: undergraduate student; graduate student)
- Prioritize the times below for when you would like to visit the SCL (ranking choice: 8 a.m.-12 p.m. mornings; 12 p.m.-5 p.m. afternoons; 5 p.m.-9 p.m. evenings, Saturdays, Sundays)
- In what ways do you prefer to get research help? (Checkmark multiple choice: walk-in front desk, in-person appointment, email, Zoom or virtual appointment, phone, text, other)
- Prioritize time blocks to get research help, from most crucial to least crucial: (ranking choice: 8 a.m.-12 p.m. mornings; 12 p.m.-5 p.m. afternoons; 5 p.m.-9 p.m. evenings)
- What services are you looking forward to at the SCL? (Checkmark choice: checking out books; using the computers and printing; checking out course materials; study spaces and areas; checking out laptops; research help)
- Do you have any questions or suggestions? Is there anything you'd like the SCL or SCL Librarian to know? (Text input)
- If you'd like to enter to win one of the (3) \$25 Amazon gift cards, please provide your email.

The following were the questions asked in the faculty survey:

- What is your email? (Text input)
- What is your department? (Text input)
- What types of materials do you wish to see at the SCL? (Checkmark multiple choice: books; course reserves; journals/magazines; DVD's; Music CD's; other)
- What subject materials would like you like to see at the SCL? (Checkmark multiple choice: [multiple subjects were listed as options])
- Do you have any questions/suggestions regarding collection development for the SCL? (Text input)

- Due to the pandemic, this spring semester, we are offering instruction sessions virtually only. In fall 2021, we plan to offer face-to-face instruction sessions as well. If you were to request a research instruction session, which method do you prefer for the fall? (Radio multiple choice: virtual (asynchronous/synchronous); in-person/face-to-face; both; I'm not sure yet/depends on campus planning; I don't know what research instruction sessions are)
- Prioritize the crucial time blocks for the SCL to be staffed and open, from most crucial to least crucial: (ranking choice: 8 a.m.-12 p.m. mornings; 12 p.m.-5 p.m. afternoons; 5 p.m.-9 p.m. evenings, Saturdays, Sundays)
- Is there anything you'd like the SCL or SCL Librarian to know? (Text input)

Student Survey: Results

The majority of Stockton students who participated in the survey were psychology, nursing, business, liberal studies, social sciences, and criminal justice majors. 82% of the student participants were undergraduate students, and 18% were graduate students.

Figure 1 illustrates students' preference to visit the SCL during the afternoon shifts. Many Stockton and distance learning students work during the day, thus most courses are taught in the evenings. As expected, students would also like the library to be open in the evenings. Similarly, students are looking forward to receiving research help in the afternoons (Figure 2). Student preference was split when it came to how they would like to receive research help from the librarian, as seen in Figure 3. Most students preferred walk-in research help, followed respectively by email, in-person appointment, and a virtual appointment.

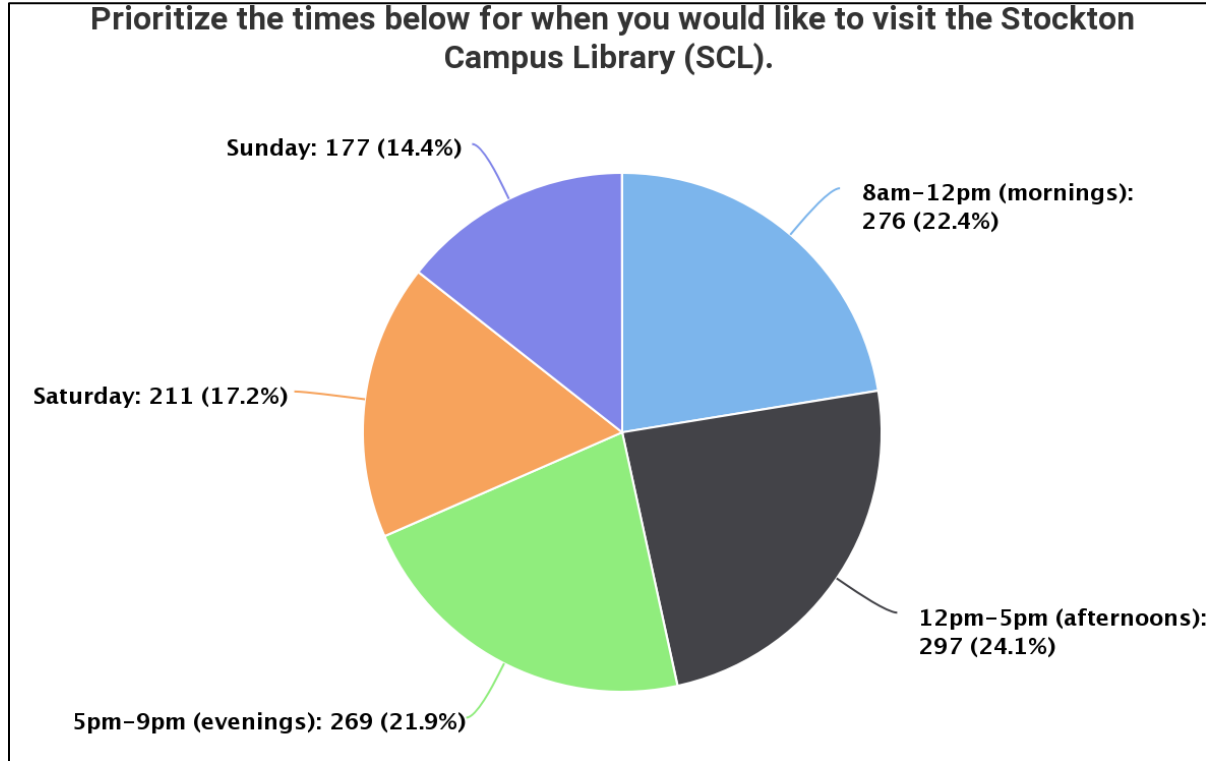


Figure 1
Student survey: Time visitation preferences.

Study spaces and computers and printing were unsurprisingly the most requested services for the SCL to offer. Students were primarily interested in having a study space or area in which they can utilize Wi-Fi, research, and print course assignments and papers (Figure 4), although it is also important to note that students were also looking forward to checking out books as well.

When students were asked if they had any questions or suggestions, most asked for study spaces, including reservable study rooms, and for extended opening hours.

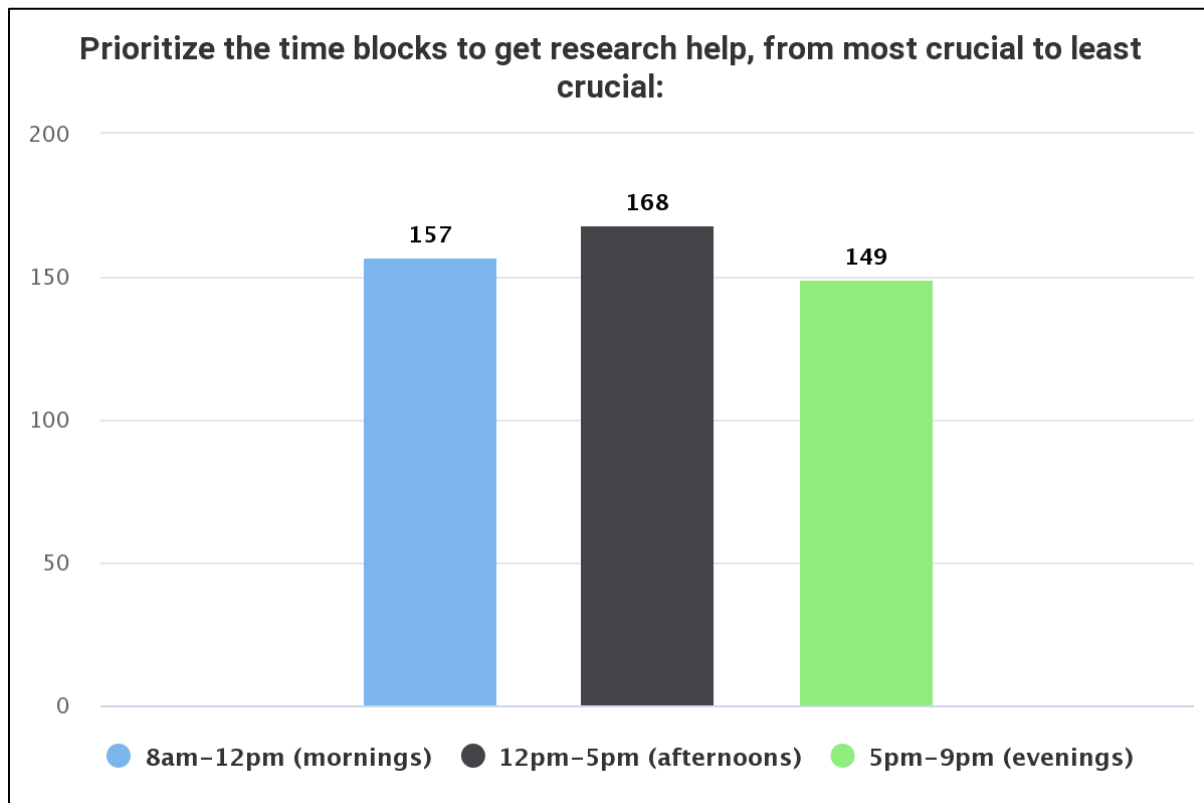


Figure 2
Student survey: Time preferences for getting research help.

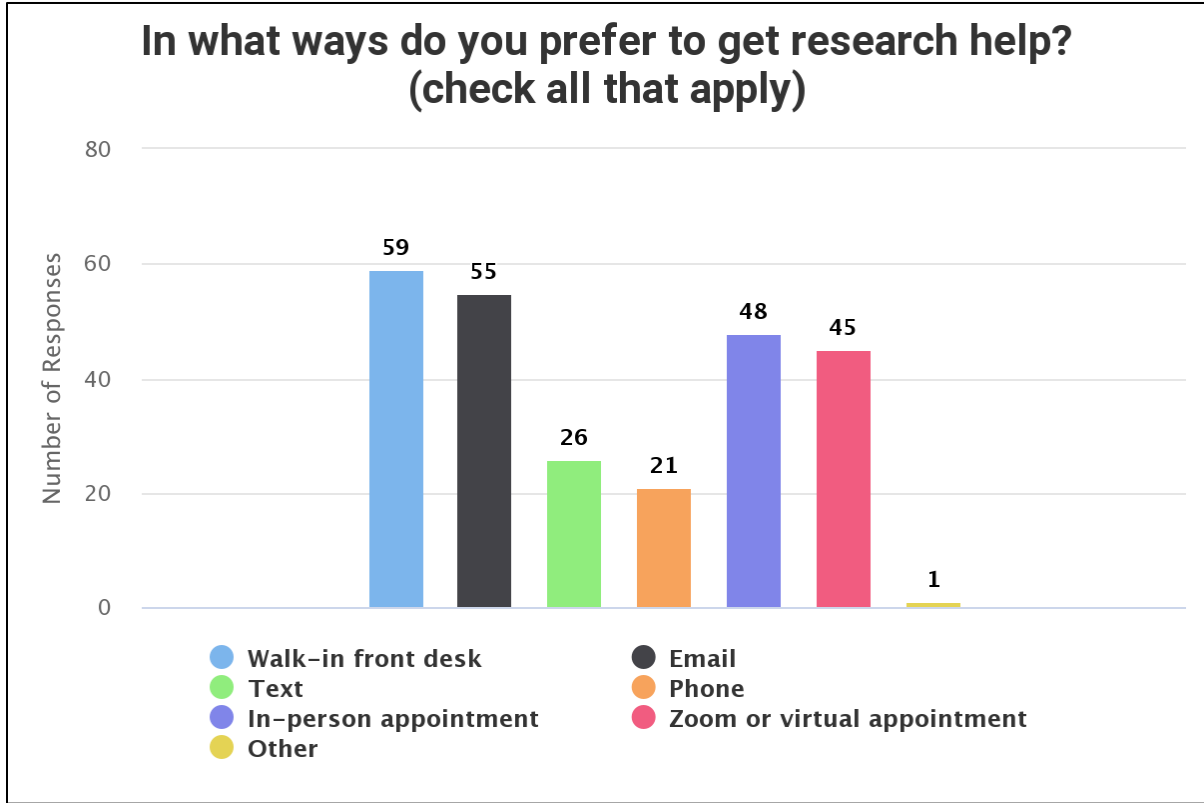


Figure 3
Student survey: Preferred methods of getting research help.

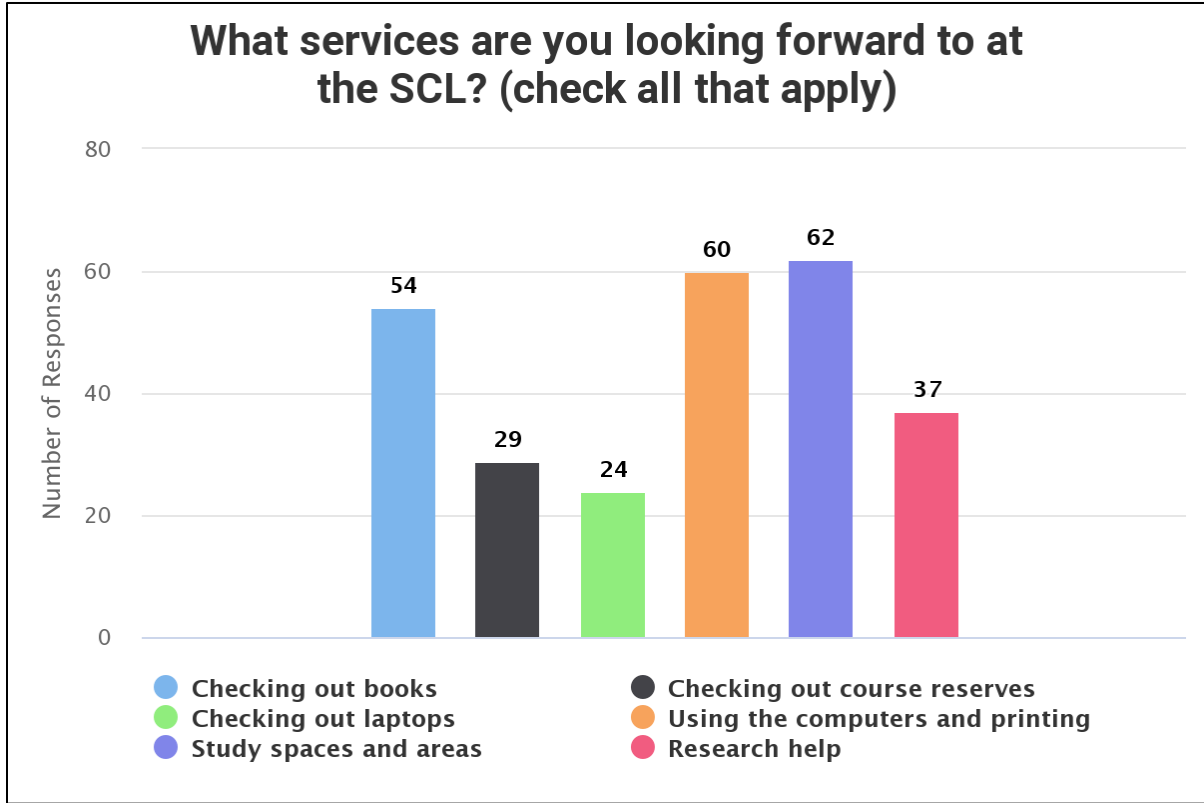


Figure 4
 Student survey: Services students are looking forward to.

Faculty Survey: Results

Similar to students, Stockton faculty chose afternoons as the preferred time for the library to be open, followed closely by evenings, then mornings (Figure 5). Faculty also preferred weekend hours, as opposed to students who did not rank the weekends so highly.

Faculty were asked to provide the SCL with feedback regarding collection development and materials they would like to see at the library. There was a general response from Stockton faculty wanting to see literature in all subjects offered at the university at the SCL, including a reference section and a children’s book collection.

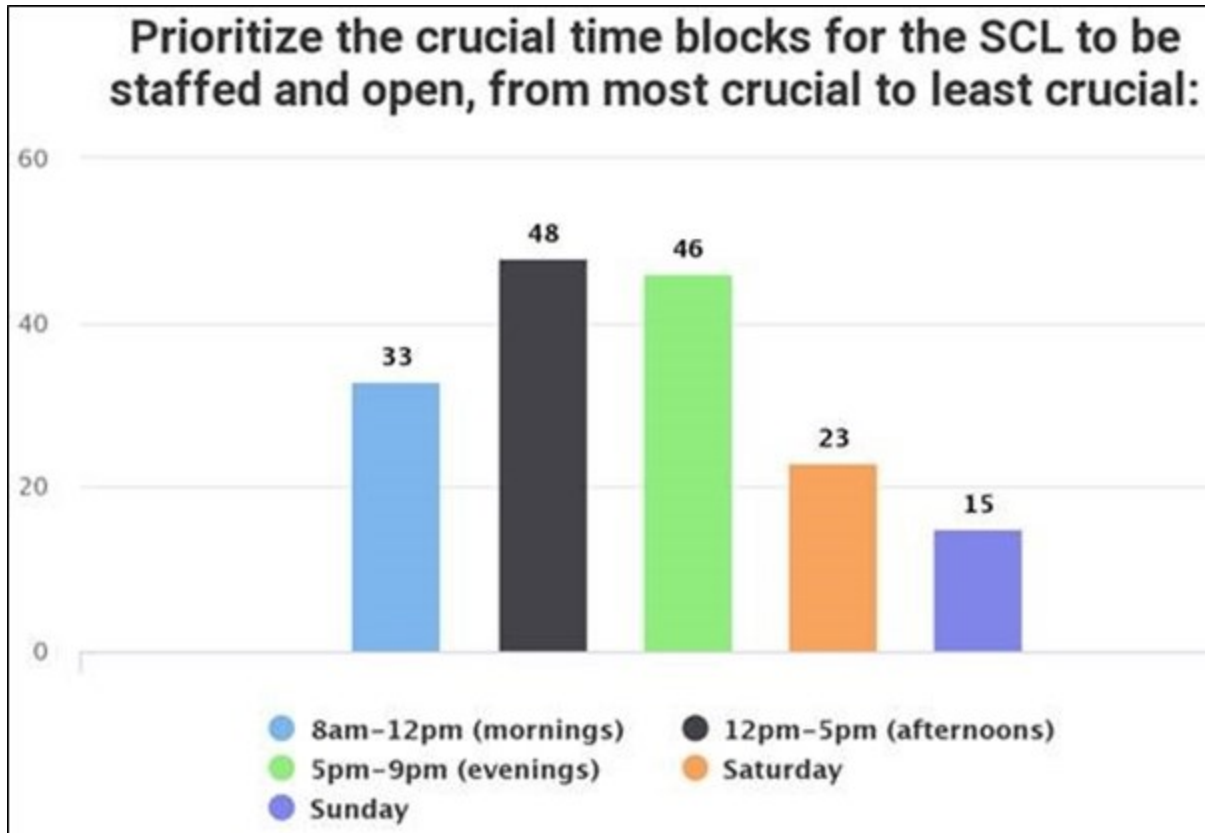


Figure 5
Faculty survey: Time preferences for library hours.

Implementation

Faculty and students were eager to have a space to study and a print collection with literature relevant to their major programs and departments. Gathering from the survey's open-ended feedback, students and faculty expressed gratitude for an on-site full-time librarian to conduct research help and offer information literacy instruction. Students and faculty were also eager for study spaces, a library collection, and Wi-Fi-access, as well as computers and printing.

These results helped us design the library space and services in our preparation for our re-opening in fall 2021, the first time in-person services were offered at the SCL since the pandemic. The survey results also serve as proof that the SCL needs consistent and unwavering attention and funding. Offering the same services and materials that are part of larger university libraries, like print collections, study spaces, and computers, is the necessary initial step to rebuilding and connecting with the community in a regional campus.

We planned our library hours based on the feedback received from the survey. Although weekend hours were not offered due to staffing, in fall 2021 the library opened from 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday. After a library staff member was hired, evening hours were implemented in spring 2022 from 9 a.m.-7 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and Fridays from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.. Following the request from students and faculty to have a diverse collection, we purchased print materials utilizing the one-time

academic collection fund of \$10,000. Given the need for study spaces, we designed the layout of the library suite to make use of the library spaces as much as possible which included adding a printer, copier, and computer tables with six computers that were spaced out to practice social distancing. Finally, we offered a research help desk and research help hours for virtual and in-person consultations.

Outcome

There were both successful and unsuccessful changes in the library. Evening hours had twice as much patron count and usage as the morning hours. Because most classes are held in the evenings, students and faculty appreciated the extended opening hours.

In terms of the library layout, the arrangement of the bookshelves proved to be a success. We assembled the bookshelves against a wall in a hallway that crosses the center of the library. When students, staff, or faculty walk across the library, they are met and drawn to the books displayed. It has since prompted the community to stop and browse the collection.

The initial layout arrangement of the reading room in the library, meant to be a quiet lounge area, did not attract many students at the start of the 2021-2022 academic year; however, I was unsure of whether this was because the library initially opened in the fall semester when many classes were held online and in hybrid formats, or if the open space layout was not attractive to students. Nonetheless, at the start of the fall 2022 semester, the reading room was reconceptualized and rearranged to remove empty spaces and provide a much more intimate study space area. In spring 2022, after the study space was rearranged, students used the lounge area more than they did in fall 2021.

During fall 2021, laptops, webcams, and other technology equipment check out statistics were low. The library promoted library technology equipment for check out via the library website and through social media to encourage students to utilize technology equipment. However, students often asked for laptops they could check out for the semester and the library offered laptops to check out for up to four hours daily. Yet in spring 2022, technology check out statistics grew. As we offer more in-person services and academic courses, we anticipate higher usage in the upcoming academic year.

Reflection

It is important to continue to work with students to grasp the community's needs and help with the extended design of the library space and services. It is not only critical to have students involved in the initial planning process but having students as partners is essential. This type of student-as-partners approach will include shared decision making and will foster inclusivity (Salisbury, 2020). As we re-establish our presence, our true focus is in supporting the success and research of the students.

The survey provided the library with data utilized for identifying and confirming services necessary for student success. Since the survey was conducted virtually and during the COVID-19 pandemic when most students had not visited the library or used its resources, I plan to conduct an in-person study as well. An in-person survey with students, while they are physically using the library space and services, may reveal new insights and provide us with alternate and relevant feedback.

Our next steps for the SCL are to continue developing the collection and continue to design the library space and library programs and services. For future design and management of library services, the SCL will follow a similar project management style as that of the National Health Service Library's redesign.

In the case study for the National Health Service Library, the redesign transformation followed a four-stage approach for project management: start, plan, implement, and close (Scott, 2021). The SCL is currently in the implement stage and will re-route to plan and implement a couple more times over, until the transformation of the SCL is complete and ready for its “close” stage. Until then, the library will connect with the community and strive for a new and enhanced library presence as the campus offers in-person services again.

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