University of Arkansas Libraries
Academic and Research Service Group (formerly Public Services Group), September 6, 2012


Interdepartmental Approach to Staffing

As we adapt to evolving services, Phil brought up the idea of sharing positions across departments according to demand. This may involve the transfer of staff to fill vacancies temporarily. Staff members would gain skills that will allow them to move up in the system. Organization-wide, we are not hiring staff at the lowest possible level; have student workers perform the lower level work. We are challenged to create a class of more highly trained library staff, while working within the state system. We must comply with the state job descriptions. Developing a program of cross-departmental training is desirable. A difficulty is in maintaining a balance between the department who loses a worker while he or she is working in another unit and the department who gains the extra worker. Two could switch jobs, so each department maintains a working employee, but supervisors must both agree to that, as training and time will be needed. A buddy system was also suggested in which a worker pair would train each other in their tasks.

While some members of the group believe that circulation experience can easily transfer to another branch temporarily, it was noted that all circulation procedures are not the same. Cross training would be helpful in establishing redundancies as well as greater continuity of services. We should train beyond simple circulation, basic skills that would be needed when a vacancy occurs. To work, it is necessary that we learn the ebb and flow of workflow in the units.

A plan is in the works to add an additional night circulation supervisor. With this added worker, Circulation may have the ability to trade people out for an hour or two to cover branch desks – particularly in the evenings. Daniels has indicated that we have been attempting to make job descriptions more universal rather than department specific. All departments are thinly staffed, and it is burdensome on them to maintain current duties with the student growth and demand on services. When staffing, we should build in redundancies and flexibility wherever possible. We need to upgrade branch staff but are limited by state job hierarchy.

We should make sure that staff has full knowledge of the tools they are using. One goal may be to establish a best practices model before beginning cross training. Departments who are cross training should have a written agreement between both departments on specific expectations of training. Some areas selected for training include: how to use the Innovative system; regularizing how we open, operate, and close throughout the organization, so that transfer between departments or units is seamless.

Technical Services needs to be included. They can share expert knowledge. Some technical staff may want to serve in public services or vice versa. Technical Services is already sharing work amongst themselves, but this would give everyone the option of participating. The idea of cross training opportunities needs to be pervasive throughout the organizational culture.
CONCLUSION: Assign Human Resources to come up with a cross-training model, which will be reviewed by Academic and Research Services Group, tweaked, and implemented. Human Resources will be cognizant of all policies and state regulations that may apply.

Report on Reserves
There have been some reported problems with classes not being able to access e-reserves of linked items. PDFs are stored on the server; also there are some links directly to databases off our servers. Currently, any student off campus has to log in twice—one to reserves, and once to authenticate from off campus—in order to access materials from our databases (Ebsco, etc). We’ve had a lot of turnover in that position, and somewhere along the line, the procedures have changed. Some areas have used an 856 field (which creates links within a bibliographic) to get around the problem of course passwording. Web Services and circulating units are working to identify best practices and establish a clear and shared understanding of how to create records for e-reserves.

The usage is down on e-reserves appears to be down; although hard copy use is up at some desks. One solution is to post materials directly in Blackboard to avoid the complexity for e-reserve users (a current initiative). Another is to test e-reserves regularly, both on campus and off campus and with different web browsers to see what roadblocks are users are encountering.

University Archivist Job Search
Four candidate interviews are scheduled for the university archivist position in the coming weeks.

Chemistry / Biochemistry Report
The Chemistry / Biochemistry Library is very busy this fall. They added twelve new seats just before the semester began and are glad of it, as they are nearly always full. They will be hosting a teleconference on November 28 using Blackboard Collaborate for the Special Libraries Food and Agriculture Division.

Chemistry faculty members have requested five new journals at a cost of $19,000. Luti and her staff compiled a report of journals and their cost per use to show to faculty and discussed with them the one in, one out policy for new serials. When new faculty request journals, we must find an annual budget increase of 110% of that journal subscription. Start-up funds only cover one time purchases.

Fine Arts Library has seen an increase in print reserves.

Thanks were given to everyone who has stepped up to help at the research desk.