



# Taking Advantage of Your Friends (of the Library) or How to Extend Library Hours Without a Budget

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# The Situation

- ❑ The Gerald R. Sherratt Library at Southern Utah University (SUU) is typically open 96 hours per week
- ❑ Our student populations have repeatedly requested extended hours, especially towards the end of each semester
- ❑ Like most libraries with limited staffing & shrinking budgets, ours could not accommodate these requests
- ❑ However, we maintain an active, responsive Friends of the Library (FOL) group....

# Working Towards a Solution

- ❑ After years of unsuccessfully trying to acquire additional funds and personnel, we began to examine creative approaches
  - ❑ We considered looking beyond our staffing issues and library budgets
  - ❑ During fall semester 2016 our FOL group was made aware of the requests for extended hours
  - ❑ In addition, the SUU Student Association (SUUSA) was made alerted to the situation and agreed to also provide assistance
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# Extending Hours

- ❑ We decided to extend library hours at the most critical/busy times: just before and during final exams
  - ❑ The schedule of extended hours includes keeping the library open until 12:00 a.m. (on Sundays) or 2:00 a.m. (Monday-Thursday)
  - ❑ Both the FOL and SUUSA groups agreed to assist with the endeavor, provided that support was made available to them
  - ❑ Volunteers were assigned to staff the library's Checkout Desk
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# Support for the Endeavor

- ❑ All volunteers were invited to attend a training session prior to working their assigned shift(s)
  - ❑ Recalling the various details of the work proved problematic for our volunteers, therefore a brief guidebook was created to explain each task a volunteer might likely encounter
  - ❑ As problems arose, extra training was offered and a new, streamlined guidebook was created to assist volunteers
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# Guidebooks for Extended Hours

- ❑ The guidebook was emailed to each volunteer and a hard copy was printed to provide a reference at the Check Out desk
- ❑ The initial guidebook included a guide to scanners, directions for item checkin/checkout, catalog search instructions , lost & found procedures, and a checklist for closing the library (10 pages total)
- ❑ The updated guidebook contains rules regarding patron headcount checks as well as a list of closing procedures (2 pages total)

# Successes: Quantitative & Qualitative

- ❑ The library witnessed an average attendance of 45-62 students present in the building during extended hours
  - ❑ Library patrons were originally able to checkin and checkout materials during the extended hours
  - ❑ The library was able to present these increased services without any direct, additional costs
  - ❑ An enormous amount of goodwill was engendered via our offering of extended hours
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# Qualitative Evidence via Survey

- How many times did users visit?
  - Did user come with friends?
  - Were there other users around?
  - Were users able to be productive?
  - Would this influence users' choice to return/stay in school?
  - Additional comments revealed...users were generally appreciative
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# Other Issues the Survey Revealed

- Extend hours during finals week
  - Have the computer lab open 24/7
  - Open the Café longer too
  - Offer extended hours on weekends
  - Make extended hours permanent
  - Enough activity for the cost?
  - The changes in times were somewhat confusing to patrons
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# Challenges

- ❑ The effort required to create a guidebook, as well as adequately train volunteers, was considerable
- ❑ Despite the support offered, volunteers continued to struggle with library procedures
- ❑ In addition, services were curtailed (book checkin & checkout were eventually eliminated) in order to simplify the responsibilities for volunteers
- ❑ Volunteers expressed a desire to have library personnel available as well during extended hours

# Costs to Consider

- ❑ Although there were no direct costs to extend library hours, we did realize indirect costs:
    - ❑ Staff time devoted to creating the guidebook as well as to train the volunteers
    - ❑ Organizing when volunteers would be slated to work has required significant staff time
    - ❑ The endeavor has required heavy promotion (from library staff & librarians) in order to alert students to the extended hours
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# Things to Consider

- ❑ The library was able to provide service and accommodate students without direct cost or significant impact upon budgets and staffing. However...
    - ❑ training to ensure quality has been difficult
    - ❑ identifying and keeping volunteers has been a challenge
  - ❑ On the other hand...
    - ❑ patrons have taken advantage of the extended hours and mostly expressed gratitude
    - ❑ the library has positively impacted the campus and retention efforts
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# Further Information

Feel free to contact us:

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*Many thanks for your attendance!*

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