Implementation of 24/7 Library Hours Provides Stronger Support to the Library’s Mission

Kathe Obrig, Associate Director Collections & Access Service; Catherine Harris, Circulation Coordinator; Kathy Lyons, Circulation Desk Supervisor; Sherida Powell, Night & Weekend Supervisor Circulation Desk

OBJECTIVE

• As a result of repeated student requests, Himmelfarb Library administration decided to implement continuous (24/7) hours of library operation on a test basis for one semester.

• The Circulation Department was charged with the implementation of the program and assessment of its success for decision-making regarding its permanence.

METHODOLOGY

• The Circulation staff initiated the planning phase by establishing a target start date, and then compiled a list of staffing, supervisory and service issues that required discussion or further action.

• Coordination with Medical Center administrators and the campus security unit helped to ensure the safety of library staff, users, and resources during overnight hours.

• The Circulation department created a formal proposal which, after review and modification by the library director, was approved.

• All hiring was done by the two night/weekend supervisors, who also manage the Overnight Library Monitors (OLMs), alternating monthly supervision to address any issues.

• Training was conducted by permanent Circulation staff.

RESULTS

• OLMs have been hired, two per night, and are paid a premium wage to staff the library overnight.

• Basic circulation duties are performed and computer, photocopying and printing assistance also provided.

• OLMs also shelve books accumulated during the night as morning personnel arrive for their Circulation Desk shifts.

• To assess overnight usage, the OLMs conduct user headcounts throughout the night. The results are compiled in an Excel spreadsheet and then analyzed to determine the cost-benefit of maintaining continuous hours of operation.

• Overnight usage spiked during final exam periods, but has remained surprisingly robust throughout the academic year.

CONCLUSION

• The usage statistics combined with positive anecdotal feedback from user surveys indicate that the additional investment in staffing has been worthwhile.

• Consumption has matched demand and administrators intend to fund overnight library staffing for the foreseeable future.

• Retention rate for the OLMs has been excellent.

• Supervision from a distance is difficult, so steps were recently implemented to ensure that OLMs remain awake and at their posts throughout the night.

• The library’s mission has been better supported though the addition of eight hours of service per day.