

Less is More: Programming Efforts That Won't Drive You Crazy (B-2(b))

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These are efforts specifically addressed to our students. Most of the estimates of staff time involved are probably under-estimated.

The University of Georgia School of Law is a very traditional law school. As part of its user education efforts the library produced an informative *Readers' Guide*. We participated in the new student orientation which included a formal 45-minute presentation to the entire group and small group tours. Unfortunately, the circulation policies of the library were the last thing any of these students cared about on their first day of law school.

2000

- Beginning in 2000 the library began to reorganize its management structure based on a team concept. The Steering Group assumed primary responsibility for governance of the library.
 - **Review our team structure:** www.law.uga.edu/law-library-faculty-staff
- First generation bookmarks - hours, phone numbers, email address, and web site address
- Ceased publication of the print *Readers' Guide* (1976-1997) and *Library Guide* (1998-2000). This information was moved to the web. All library policies are now public.
 - **Review our policies:** www.law.uga.edu/rules-and-policies
- Continue distributing a large number of handouts along with the Lexis and Westlaw passwords during the 1L orientation. These materials still had to be created, updated, and compiled for distribution. Just compiling the packets took four staff members an hour each (4 staff hours expended).
- Conducted small group tours of the library
 - **Crazy factor:** Seven librarians each gave three tours lasting 30-40 minutes (between 10.5 and 14 staff hours expended). This does not include the time to organize the schedule and create the sign-up lists.

2001

- Still participating in the 1L orientation and began sponsoring the morning coffee break
 - We bought Krispy Kreme donuts, made coffee, bought bottled water, and ordered fruit from Campus Catering. Initially the cost was approximately \$500.00
 - Eventually Campus Catering brought everything except the donuts. The cost averaged \$4.00 per person. The entering class size was 210-225. Do the math.
 - **Really crazy factor:**
 - Eight librarians, six computing services staff all attended the 45 minute presentation and were introduced (10.5 staff hours expended).
 - Does not count staff time setting up, buying donuts, and cleaning up

- Purchased mugs for distribution to the students during the library tours.
 - We now allowed drinks in the library but they had to use our mug or bottles with screw-on tops. Initial order of 500 at about \$3.00 per mug equals \$1500.
 - **What we eventually learned:**
 - Everyone hated the mugs. They had no heat retention, soon began leaking, and the lid was too hard to use.
 - Everyone had their own mugs they would rather use. Lexis and Westlaw gave out much better mugs

2002

- User Education/PR Team was established. This team was primarily responsible for organizing the 1L orientation. Things continued pretty much as they always had. Like life in general, some event is often needed to spur a change.

2004

- The team structure is still a work in progress. User Education/PR Team is split into two teams with very different but more focused responsibilities.
 - Reference Team
 - Public Relations Team
- First coasters
 - Began as an effort to reduce rings on the custom made furniture from Thos. Moser Cabinetmakers
 - Made of card stock and produced by the campus print shop but it got our brand out there and students did use them. They did not last very long and they got used as bookmarks.

2005

- Eliminated library tours
 - Students were no longer required to take a tour and they really did not need to know where the *Federal Reporter* was.
- Began offering plastic shopping bags
 - Very popular with patrons who checked-out more than two items and on rainy days (\$740 for a 3-4 year supply)

2006

- First Lunch & Learn programs - started with two per term and now present four per term
 - The session is on one topic and lasts no longer than ½ hour, period
 - The librarians recycle programs from previous years and from our CLE programs for the Georgia Bar
 - Pizza delivered (between \$200 and \$250 per session)
- Candy bars on last day of class (\$30.00)

2007

- First student survey
 - Their comments were not about databases and performing research but about noise issues and lack of electrical outlets on the balcony. As a direct result of the survey we began offering ear plugs in a basket on the circulation desk.
 - We initially placed extension cords on the balcony and then had more outlets installed.
- Re-purposed an old display case into a drink stand at the front entrance
 - They could not bring in paper or styrofoam cups but we gave them a place to stow their drinks if they were making a quick trip into the library.
- Second generation coasters
 - Still paper but more colorful

2008

- Book Repair Clinic
 - We noticed that the very expensive text books were falling apart after one term.
 - Set-up on the last day of class in both terms. A big impact for a small investment in supplies.
 - Allowed us to highlight the skills of staff members.
- Passing the (Ice Cream) Bar Social
 - Friday before the bar exam, for the students using the library
 - **What we eventually learned:** Get more Drumsticks
- *Amicus Briefs*, the library's electronic newsletter, debuts the Law Dawgs feature
 - Students, faculty, and staff submit pictures of their pets, we do not discriminate against non-canines; one is chosen at random for inclusion in the newsletter
 - Wildly popular
- Coffee Just Because
 - Often coupled with something that might be disruptive such as construction or major maintenance
 - **What we eventually learned:** Do not bother making decaf
- 1L orientation was reorganized and we were removed from the program
 - Still tried to get the information out with a packet.
 - Continued to sponsor (meaning paid for) the morning coffee break but the school took care of the refreshments. Unfortunately there was no coffee and no Krispy Kremes!

- **What we eventually learned:** Sponsoring a break did not actually give us real face time with the students or allow us to share any information with them. We knew we had to do things differently.

2009

- “Maureen Explains It All”
 - Student Services Librarian presents the bare essentials; getting accounts set-up, registering passwords, printers, wireless network
 - Presented during the first week of class and scheduled around the 1L classes
 - Lexis and Westlaw academic representatives and their student workers provide the snacks and distribute passwords. A good example of synergy.

2010

- Westlaw now sponsors the ear plugs
- Prizes Just Because You’re Here
 - For students studying and working in the library in the summer
 - One week of daily drawings for Starbucks cards, mugs, markers, even an iPod.
 - The prizes were generally things the librarians had acquired at various meetings and conferences
- “A Library With a View” blog begins
 - All the librarians are expected to post occasionally
 - **Our official blog:** ugalawlibrary.wordpress.com/
- Organized student focus groups
 - We have come to accept that no matter what mechanism we use, most students will not hear our message
 - We have to focus on what they really want or need. What can we do to make their lives a little easier?

2011

- Debuted real cork coasters
 - Coincided with greening efforts which included a digital copier
 - The students noticed!
 - They still seem to disappear rather rapidly.
- Second student survey
 - Positive comments about the library staff and the efforts we make
 - As a result of the survey we revised the drink policy to allow any container with a lid and we now provide book stands, thumb drives, and umbrellas for checkout.
- The Lunch & Learn programs have increased in popularity but we heard from students who had conflicts so we are experimenting with offering morning sessions.
 - We offer coffee (duh!) and snacks

- It is easier to schedule a classroom
- **What we are still learning:** It takes time for them to find you so never take it personally.

There are many articles describing library programming and public relations efforts. Many of them might be termed as trendy. Things like trading cards, rent-a-dog, fairs, and games. Or they describe an all encompassing effort that took two years to plan, lasted a week, and involved every member of the staff. What they have in common is a lot of focus on the library, what we do and what we have. This constant effort to justify our existence can lead to programitis, offering more and making it bigger and louder. This just ends up driving everyone crazy and is generally not a good return on investment (ROI). The number of staff hours and/or expense does not get us any more notice from the students.

The UGA Law Library, after many years, has discovered that is it the small gestures the students actually notice. The things they were most pleased with were the things that were the easiest for us to do. We are willing to experiment. No effort is deemed a failure even if we do not try it again. It just did not give a good ROI. While we can do big and loud with the best of them, those efforts did not endear us to the students. By focusing less on us and scaling back our programs we gained:

- More attention from our target groups
- Higher regard by the students, faculty, and administration
- Less stress
- More time for other projects