A Quiet Revolution:

Evaluating a Personal Librarian Program to Meet the Evolving Information Needs of Students

Judy M. Spak, MLS, AHIP and Jan Glover, MLS, AHIP

OBJECTIVE

To evaluate a Personal Librarian program on the ten-year anniversary of the program and to inform practice moving forward

BACKGROUND

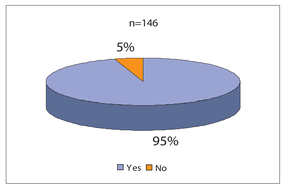
The Cushing/Whitney Medical Library at the Yale School of Medicine has offered a Personal Librarian program to medical center students since 1996. This outreach program matches students to a professional librarian as they matriculate; a relationship that is maintained until the student graduates. Personal librarians offer individualized assistance for almost anything – from library policy/procedure questions to thesis research. The program requires nominal effort on the part of the librarians making it possible to expand the program to include other student groups. A recent survey revealed that students are extremely satisfied with the program and would generally prefer more contact from their personal librarian.

METHODS

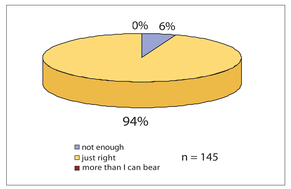
- Goals
  - evaluate program satisfaction and ascertain how we could improve
  - inform practice from this point forward
- Non-scientific
- Used Survey Monkey
- Short – 7 questions
- Deployed 22 April to 4 June 2006
- Sent to YSM 1st thru 5th year students and all current PA student (~500 students)
- 146 respondents (~29% response rate)

RESULTS

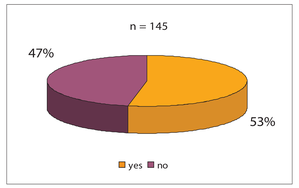
Q1. Do you know who your personal librarian is?



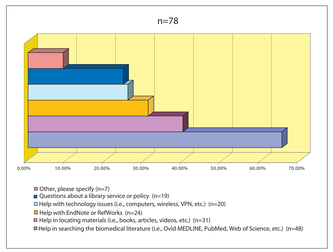
Q2. Is the amount of communication from your personal librarian…



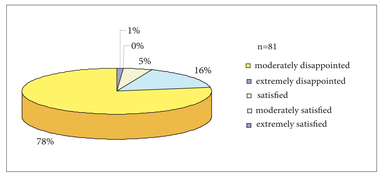
Q3. Have you ever contacted your personal librarian?



Q4. Why did you contact your personal librarian?



Q5. How satisfied were you with your personal librarian's response to your request(s)?



Q6. What is the one thing that we could do to make the personal librarian program better?

Communication

- "Maybe have one mandatory meeting with your person librarian during 1-2 yr of med school to review basic search methods, etc?"

The timing of contact

- "I guess if they checked in with us a few months into the year we might be more likely to use them, which would make the program much more valuable. I just remember meeting him the first week when everything was an overwhelming blur."

Defining the personal librarian role

- "Maybe explain exactly how the personal librarians can help with research"

Q7. Please share any other opinions or anecdotes about this program with us.

- "I like having someone to direct questions to without having to figure out whom to contact at the library."
- "Judy, Jan, and Mark are my heroes. I only hope the administration is aware of how integral they are to the functioning of the medical library and medical school in general. Their approachability is by far the greatest and most important quality."
- "It is wonderful! Thank you. The personal librarians could teach our research/thesis classes better than our program's own faculty!"

CONCLUSIONS

- Students feel the program is worthwhile
- Librarians see room for improvement
  - o Redesign program website (www.med.yale.edu/library/education/personal/)
  - o More planned events
  - o Coordinators to construct timeline to assist all personal librarians
- Re-evaluate program in 2-3 years

Cushing/Whitney Medical Library
Yale School of Medicine