

## Title Slide

What time do you close? Determining library services with an evidence-based approach

Louise McGillis

Associate University Librarian

Memorial University, Corner Brook, Newfoundland, Canada

International Conference on Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries (Chania, Crete)

The May 2010 issue of Quill and Quire, Canada's magazine of book news, there was an article on library hours. Major Canadian Universities are now offering 24/7 access to their libraries. The University of Toronto opened its doors around the clock back in 2001! Since that time many other large Canadian Universities have followed suit. There was a great deal of concern in the library community that as electronic resource collections expanded and use grew, demand for the physical library space would decline. This has not happened, in fact demand for expanded hours has never been greater!

## Why?

libraries becoming more service focused

libraries catering to the "night owls" and students living with others

libraries have new users groups – those who work during the day

## Ferriss Hodgett Library

My library - Ferriss Hodgett Library – serves a small campus of 1300 students and 200 faculty and staff. We are an undergraduate university – there are no grad students. We have a small print collection to support the programmes we teach. However, we are part of a larger university and as a part we also have access to over 50k electronic journals, 100k electronic books and 200 electronic databases!

The library on the main campus is currently exploring 24/7 access to a small part of the library and we have been asked for 24/7 by some of our users. So how do library leaders in small institutions, with limited financial and human resources, respond to this challenge?

We know students want expanded hours – the data tells us:

In 2007 the university-wide LIBQUAL survey, only 64 respondents were from our campus library. The comments about library hours focused primarily on expansion of *weekend* hours. However, we had also received informal feedback from students via email and in person regarding extending the weekend hours, so we took the LIBQUAL responses as our starting point to get more feedback about hours from the library users.

## Original Library Hours

### 2007 Online Survey

Then we conducted a university-wide online survey in the Fall of 2007 to:

- gain a better understanding of the times users visit the library
- determine if hours were extended, what times users would like to have access
- determine what services users would need to access

Our campus received 168 responses.

### Survey Results

What we found:

- no clear demand from users to extend existing regular semester hours
- need to pilot extended hours for exam period
- need to promote extended Saturday hours
- need to provide general circulation services during extended hours  
not just study space, but services needed during these times: 70% of students wanted circulation services
- will never be able to please all the people all the time!!

### First Change to Library Hours (Winter 2008)

Next step – made some additional changes based on what we found

#### **CLICK**

- extended Friday hours (added 5-8pm)
- extended Saturday hours (from 1-5 to 12-6)
- extended Sunday hours (added 2 hrs: 12-2pm)

### Final Exams Pilot (2008)

Winter 2008 Semester - "Study around the clock" - the library was open for a 63 hour marathon study session from 8am on a Saturday until 11pm on the Monday (two days before the start of exams)

"Study Around the Clock" evaluation:

- was as pilot project – and spun that way
- was very popular and well attended, people did come and stay late

### Student Comment:

*"Great idea to have the library open for 63 hours; its like the best idea ever! It would be awesome to keep the library opened throughout the final exam period"*

- I think they came because they knew they could stay and their work would not get interrupted.
- Statistics: staff counted the number of students in the library every half an hour

## Graph

numbers did begin to drop off after 3am

## Late-night Hours During Exams

had a staff meeting to decide how to proceed  
decided to spread extra hours over three weekends during exams  
open Friday, Saturday and Sunday until 2am - with coffee and healthy snacks.  
We have done this every semester since fall 2008

Continued to keep stats by counting number of users in the library  
The pattern remains pretty constant:

- Sunday is the most popular study day
- Late afternoon to late night most popular
- Will show slight variations depending on when exams start

## Little extras for Late-night Hours During Exams

students appreciate the extra efforts by library staff

- Free coffee
- Healthy snacks (popcorn)
- Free earplugs

## Library Yoga Pic

Library Yoga – On a Saturday morning, the weekend before exams started. Not just yoga, but techniques to de-stress & re-energize.

What about weekend hours for the rest of the semester? We followed the same process for regular semester weekend hours.

## Second Change to Library Hours

We had tried opening earlier on Sundays for one semester but anecdotal evidence from staff indicated there were not enough students to justify a Sunday noon opening, **CLICK** so we went back to opening at 2:00 pm. However, we still wanted to offer additional hours on the weekend, so we expanded Saturday evening to 8:00 pm instead, as this was also requested.

## Winter 2010 Sunday Pilot

However, we continued to receive requests for earlier Sunday hours. We weren't sure we could justify doing this for the entire semester, so in Winter 2010, we opened at noon on Sundays at the END of the semester (5 weeks plus exam period). This time we kept careful usage statistics. This is not the first time we had opened earlier on Sundays, but the first time we did it and kept track of the numbers.

## Results - Graph

For the last 5 weeks of the semester (before exam period) very few people used the library during this extra time (average of 41 users per week). Staff feedback and statistics indicated this was not a good use of our resources. Now starting to have evidence to demonstrate why opening earlier on Sundays may not be cost effective!

## Winter 2010 Exam Period Weeknights

Also in Winter 2010, we decided to also try staying open 1 hour later on weeknights during the exam period. Closing at midnight instead of 11:00 pm.

## Results – Graph

Weeknights during exams – that 1 hour showed much higher usage than the 2 hours on Sundays (average of 73 users per night)

## Comparison Graph

Looked at how many people were here on Sundays, versus how many people were here on weeknights. Staying open until midnight during the week may be a better use of resources.

## Staffing

During this process to expand hours, I have seen great greater staff involvement:

- Suggestion of new service (yoga)
- Responding to demands for extra hours (on the ground and know what is happening, know where to add and where to hold back)
- **Receptive to move from collections to service model** (happy to work late night hours) this is where libraries need to focus their energies

Led to change in staffing models:

While examining library hours we also wanted to make sure that library staff were always present when the library was open. Historically a good deal of the evening and weekend coverage was done by students alone – but this was proving problematic:

- Students need supervision and guidance
- Students can't provide all services

## Conclusion – Ongoing Process

2010-2011 academic year:

- will pilot a number of extra hours not just during exams or end of semester as we had been doing, but for the entire year
- staying open until midnight Monday to Thursday all semester
- Saturday 10-12 (add) all semester
- Sunday 12-2 (add) all semester

will keep stats on all these extra hours to obtain more concrete data

will staff low traffic times (early morning weekend hours) with student workers

If these hours are made available for the entire academic year, not just during exams or end of semester, we will be in a better position to determine when the library receives the greatest use

may even add some more yoga - library meditation!!