

Dissertation Plan

Working title of the dissertation

Late night opening in academic libraries: evaluation of the extended hours service at Poppleton University Library

Brief Review of the literature and list of references

The Follett Report (Joint Funding Council's Libraries Review Group, 1993) recommended that university libraries consider lengthening opening hours in an effort to reduce the pressure on space caused by rising numbers of students. This may seem surprising when considering Lancaster's (1982) forecast that we would see a 'disembodiment' of the library in the last two decades of the twentieth century due to developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs). Whilst technological advances have allowed many library resources to be accessed remotely, user surveys indicate that increased access to the physical library is still in high demand. Delaney (2002: 20) writes: "*with 24 x 7 access to electronic resources comes an expectation of similar access to print resources.*"

Reduced funding means that university libraries need to consider what is most important to students. Longer opening hours appear to be a priority. Whilst most demand has been passive, for example indicated by user surveys, in some cases it has been much more direct. Research, into which students use the library at night, and their reasons for doing so, is required to gain greater understanding of how we can best meet the needs of these students, and Curry (2003) advocates a user-centred and focussed on opinions and needs as the most effective way of investigating this phenomenon.

References (NB *not all of the references are used in this review given its brevity – however this list illustrates the wide range of sources consulted*):

Arant, W. & Benefiel, C. R. (2002) Hours of operation and service in academic libraries: towards a national standard. *Public Services Quarterly*, 1(1), 71-85.

Brophy, P. (2001) *The library in the twenty-first century: new services for the information age*, London: Library Association Publishing

- Curry, A. (2003) Opening Hours: The Contest Between Diminishing Resources and a 24/7 World. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* [online] **29**(6), 375-385. Available from: <http://www.sciencedirect.com> [accessed 5 January 2005].
- Delaney, M. (2002) Library access 24x7 – the experience so far: is it a myth or is it more of a reality than we think? *SCONUL Newsletter* [online] **26**, 20-22. Available from: http://www.sconul.ac.uk/pubs_stats/newsletter/ [accessed 5 January 2005].
- Engel, D. et al (2002) Opening a library 24 hours. *Journal of Library Administration*, **36**(4), 95-108.
- Hart, C. (1998) *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Imagination*, London: SAGE.
- Joint Funding Council's Libraries Review Group (1993) *The Follett Report* [online]. Available from: <http://www.cpa.ed.ac.uk/reports/follett> [accessed 16 December 2004].
- Kniffel, L. K. (2003) Carnegie Mellon Student Protest Gets Library Hours Restored. *American Libraries*, **24**, 903-4.
- Lancaster, F. W. (1982) *Libraries and librarians in the age of electronics*, Arlington: Information Resources Press.
- Rea, G. (2003) Open 24 hours at the University of Bath Library and Learning Centre. *Assignment*, **20**(4), 47-49.
- Read, J. (1997) 'What do you want?'; a question academic libraries should be asking their users. *SCONUL Newsletter*, **11**, 6-7.
- Simmonds, P. L. & Andaleeb, S. S. (2001) Usage of Academic Libraries: The Role of Service Quality, Resources, and User Characteristics. *Library Trends*, **49**(4), 626-634
- The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1997) *Higher Education in the Learning Society (The Dearing Report)* [online]. Available from: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/nciche/> [accessed 22 November 2004].
- Weaver, M. & Noel, L. (2000) Home alone? Unstaffed academic services: implications for practice. *The New Review of Information and Library Research*, **6**, 53-76.
- Willoughby, C. (2003) The self service library at Northumbria University. *SCONUL Newsletter* [online] **28**, 22-24. Available from: http://www.sconul.ac.uk/pubs_stats/newsletter/ [accessed 5 January 2005].

Research Design

Context

In November 2004, Poppleton University Library introduced an extended hours service (9pm-12am, Mon-Thurs, term time only) at their main site. The decision to extend hours was made in response to feedback from user surveys. Due to financial constraints it was decided that a reduced service would be offered during these hours. The library building is open but is not staffed by library employees. Access is only granted to members of Poppleton University holding a valid ID card. Two members of staff have been employed to oversee the library during these hours but are not there to answer enquiries or issue books. The library is only available for reference, study space and the use of computers. The purpose of this research is to determine the effectiveness of this new service.

Research objectives

- 1) To determine the level of library use during extended opening hours (9pm-12am, Mon-Thurs)
- 2) To create a profile of the late night library user
- 3) To establish the reasons for use of the library during extended opening hours
- 4) To determine whether service levels meet user expectations

Research Strategy

The research will have a mixed-method approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Research Methodology

Statistical data collected by the library will be analysed to determine the extent of library use during these hours and whether levels vary depending on the time of year (objective 1).

- 2) Observation

Over a one week period (Mon-Thurs) a count will be undertaken to determine the number of people entering the library during the extended hours period (objective 1).

3) Survey

A self-completion questionnaire will be distributed during the same week as the observation takes place. This questionnaire will be piloted on library peers before being distributed. Quantitative data (using closed questions) will be collected in order to create a profile of the late night library user (objective 2) and to establish the reasons for using the library during extended hours (objective 3). Qualitative data (using open questions) will be collected to determine whether service levels meet user expectations and any issues that they wish to raise concerning the opening hours of the library (objective 4).

4) Interviews

Semi-structured interviews (purposeful sample) will be used to obtain more in depth data relating to user perceptions of the extended opening service (objective 4).

Validity

“Validity is concerned with whether the findings are ‘really’ about what they appear to be about (Robson, 2002:93)”

The issue of validity is addressed in this research using triangulation. Triangulation involves the use of multiple sources to enhance the rigour of the research (Robson, 2002:174). This research uses both data triangulation, the use of more than one method of data collection, and methodological triangulation, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Reflection on Ethical Research issues

Permission has been granted by Poppleton University Library to undertake this research and any data collected will be made available to them along with the findings. Participants in this research will be involved on an entirely voluntary basis and their anonymity will be assured. Robson (2002:203) highlights the political issues involved with evaluation research, for example, whose interests the research is serving. The sole purpose of this research is the

completion of a Masters level dissertation and is not being undertaken to serve any other interests. Participants will be made aware of this.

References:

Brown, A. & Dowling, P. (1998) *Doing Research/Reading Research: A Mode of Interrogation for Education*, London: Falmer Press.

Cullen, R. (2001) Perspectives on User Satisfaction Surveys. *Library Trends*, **49**(4), 662-686.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2nd ed., London: SAGE.

Jacobs, N. A. (1996) Students' perceptions of the library service at the University of Sussex: practical quantitative and qualitative research in an academic library. *Journal of Documentation*, **52**(2), 139-162.

Lancaster, F. W. (1977) *The Measurement and Evaluation of Library Services*, Washington: Information Resources Press.

Leedy, P. D. (1993) *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 5th ed., New York: Macmillan.

Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Blackwell

Silverman, D. (2000) *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, London: SAGE

Timetable

October-December: AIR module: introducing research skills and their application

January: Topic formulation, literature search & dissertation plan

February: Hand in dissertation plan, assigned tutor

February-March: Literature review, design & pilot questionnaire

April: Observation & distribution of questionnaire, interviews

May-July: Primary and secondary data analysis

51lunwen.org

August-mid September: Writing up

英语论文网

51lunwen.org