2015

Let's circulate: a report on the 1st annual New Jersey access services meeting.

Denise O'Shea
Montclair State University

Bethany Sewell
The College of New Jersey

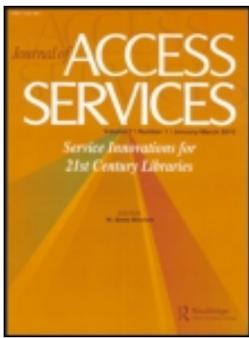# Let's Circulate: A Report on the 1st Annual New Jersey Access Services Meeting

Denise O'Shea & Bethany Sewell

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Let's Circulate: A Report on the 1st Annual New Jersey Access Services Meeting

DENISE O'SHEA

Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ

BETHANY SEWELL

TCNJ Library, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ

In 2014, access services librarians and professional staff from various institutions all over New Jersey came together at The College of New Jersey, in Ewing Township, to discuss regional trends and issues in access services. Library staff at these institutions face many of the same issues from managing student assistants, to dealing with stacks management, and handling building security. The goal of the daylong meeting was to build bonds between access services staff at the different institutions, and to learn from one another's experiences during a series of roundtable discussions, and informal conversations over coffee and lunch. It was the first meeting of its kind in New Jersey and the organizers plan to make it an annual occurrence under the name Let's Circulate. *This article is a summary of the first meeting.*

KEYWORDS   Access services, libraries, circulation, course reserves, stacks management, student assistants, billing, building management, security

BACKGROUND

Access services librarians and professional staff were invited to meet and discuss common issues facing today's libraries that involve:

• Circulation,
• Course reserves,

- Stacks management,
- Student assistants,
- Patron billing,
- Building management and security.

GOALS

The goals of the meeting were to:

- Meet and discuss the issues and trends in access services in New Jersey,
- Learn from one another's experiences,
- Build bonds between staff at our different institutions.

Access services librarians and professional staff in New Jersey do not have a professional organization where topics and issues related to access services are discussed regularly. Often when the topic of access services is addressed at a professional meeting, the focus is on interlibrary loan. Also, due to the nature of the work of access services, such as opening and closing the library building and staffing the circulation desk, it can be very difficult for access services staff to leave campus to attend a meeting. Thus, most access services staff work in isolation and are not always able to put a face to the name behind an e-mail or phone message from another library. This meeting came about because a small group of access services librarians had begun to visit each other's libraries in order to learn from one another and found those visits to be very helpful. The visits led to a lunchtime gathering at a statewide academic library conference (VALE) where a plan was discussed to host a larger meeting that would bring together access services staff from throughout the state.

LOCATION

The first annual Let's Circulate meeting was held at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), in Ewing Township, New Jersey, on March 14, 2014, and was hosted by staff from the Library. The cost of the meeting was free for participants and included parking, coffee break, and lunch. The central location and low cost for attending the meeting helped to bolster attendance.

MEETING CONVENERS

The meeting conveners were Bethany Sewell, Access Services and Reference Librarian, The College of New Jersey; and Denise O'Shea, Head of Access Services and Systems, Montclair State University. Bethany put together a survey-based registration from that was used for participant sign up and that allowed participants to vote on topics for discussion in advance of the meeting.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

The topics selected by the participants were:

- Role of Access Services in the Digital Age,
- New Technology in Access Services,
- Stacks Management and Inventory Projects,
- Building Management & Security.

MEETING FORMAT

The overall format of the meeting was informal roundtable discussions based on the topics selected by the meeting participants. The meeting started out with a welcome from the Library Dean, Taras Pavlovsky, followed by brief introductions from all of the participants. Bethany Sewell recorded the meeting notes, and Denise O'Shea led the discussions. The meeting wrapped up with a discussion of next steps, followed by a tour of the Library by interested participants.

PARTICIPANTS

Twenty-four access services librarians and staff representing a range of mostly academic libraries gathered at TCNJ for the free meeting. There were:

- Large and small, public and private academic institutions, including three community colleges in attendance.
- Attendees came from North, Central, and South Jersey.
- There was one attendee from a public library.

TRENDS

Merging Circulation and Reference Desks

One of the trends reported at the meeting was access services and reference services merging to a single service desk model. This was described by Seton Hall Library, who took down their reference desk and merged with circulation. The reference and access services staff are learning to work together. They have a new desk with dual monitors. This has opened space for students. Another outcome of a merged service desk is less time on the reference desk by reference librarians. The benefit is that there is a one-stop-service point, and students do not need to be referred from one desk to another.

Academic Commons That Integrate IT Services With Library Services

Some libraries have a new "Academic Commons" in which IT is included in the services offered. A schedule of IT student workers was provided for those with IT help associated with the service desk. Others that have not made this move are talking about it.

Satellite Circulation Desks

William Patterson University and Montclair State University both set up satellite circulation desks to help patrons at the point of need, and circulation staff are roaming the stacks with iPads. Student workers at William Paterson also use iPads to roam the building, and they wear special vests so that they can be identified as library workers who can help. Signage for the satellite desk was also discussed.

Use of Tablets and Mobile Devices in the Stacks

Seton Hall has taken handheld devices into the stacks. They use Motorola radios to page the reference librarians.

NEW TECHNOLOGY IN ACCESS SERVICES

Book, Microform, and Document Scanners

Scanners were also discussed. Those with scanners available to patrons such as the iVana bookscan station and the KIC have seen a drop in circulation. However, these scanners can give use stats, which can be helpful for assessment. The Scanpro 3000 was recommended for use with microforms. Issues to consider when offering scanning stations are charging for scanning and copyright. It is recommended that the copyright law be posted next to patron-accessible scanners. Overall, participants agreed that book scanning and microfilm scanning stations are popular but lead to a drop in circulation.

RFID and the Use of Mobile Technology

Mobile checkout and wireless checkout were discussed; this can be done with libraries using RFID. RFID also helps shelf reading and inventory projects. Meeting participants agreed that RFID looks promising, but it is expensive and time consuming to set up. A program, Shelflister, is also being used for an inventory project. This program gives staff workers the item's status in the catalog while they are at the shelf. One library also uses Google forms for inventory purposes. For mobile library catalogs, Boopsie

has been used by some of our libraries, and other libraries had experience with Bookmyne.

COMMON ISSUES

Fines, Fees, and Faculty Borrowing Habits

Some libraries are revisiting fines and billing. Some only charge fees for recalls and lost books that need to be replaced. The reason for stopping the collection of fines was to reduce the barriers for patrons using the library. As circulation decreases, there is less worry about circulation times and fees. Some libraries even allow unlimited renewals. Others generously waive fees and tell patrons not to worry so much about the fee. Laptop circulation was also discussed: Some libraries hold patron IDs for laptops loans. The discussion moved on to faculty renewals. Faculty members often keep materials for many years. One library describes their policy as being a recall culture. The idea was that if no one needs a book immediately, then why do we insist on books being back? It was also noted, however, that students can't wait for a recall. The impact of fines on the library budget was also discussed, as many libraries do not keep the fees collected and others don't know where the fees go. Overall, staff are given authority to waive fines with an emphasis on being positive but not punitive. Another library suggested taking on a "pestering" tactic by sending daily reminders and other notices via text messages. One library was working on a program to reward Honor students by offering them a longer circulation period. The discussion moved on to receipts and notifications. Most students don't read their e-mail from the library. Some ILS systems allow for text message notices, but in general this is an opt-in option.

Inclement Weather and Keeping the Building Open

"What about this weather?" Winter 2014 has been particularly difficult for the libraries in attendance, and there have been multiple snow closures. Many libraries are considered "essential services": The staff are essential employees, meaning that they have to work and keep the library open even during snow closures. The discussion moved to building issues and security.

Theft, Vandalism, and Security

Some libraries have security guards in the evenings and weekends. Others have no security, which is problematic for those who are open to the general public. One library has student officers. At one large state institution, there are some homeless patrons who stay all day. This doesn't cause too

much trouble, and they have a patron conduct policy addressing language, hygiene, and general disruptive behavior. When students complain about the homeless in the library, the key is to educate them on your policies. Other problems with being open to the general public include unaccompanied minors. "No children" policies help with that situation.

Having security in the library helps deter thefts attributed to students leaving their property (laptops, textbooks, etc.) unattended. Speaking of personal property left behind, many libraries house a lost and found and find things like glasses, keys, thumb drives, etc. To solve this problem, some libraries provide lockers. In some cases, lockers are highly used and they need more; others do not see their lockers used at all.

Other security issues are those having to do with book theft. The question arose about security gates and tattle tape. Some security gates are sensitive and go off from nonlibrary book-related personal items. What if we just turned off the security? Would it be worth the replacement costs for a few books to stop purchasing tattle tape for all books?

Policies for Food and Quiet Study Areas in Libraries

Food policies were also discussed. Many libraries have a café, which can cause an issue. Rowan has a no-food policy, and they have a 100% compliance rate. It just took time and patron education. Keys to food in the library are designated food spaces like the café or lobby, and it is also helpful to have support from the maintenance staff.

Declining Use of Library E-Reserves

Many attendees noted that e-reserves are going down, due to faculty using course management software directly. TCNJ has stopped providing e-reserves altogether. Reserves request forms were also discussed, and many have both an online and paper form for faculty to make their reserves requests.

Other common issues discussed included:

- Providing access to online resources for members of the public,
- Training student assistants,
- Managing group study rooms.

IDEAS

Many other ideas were shared among the participants as outlined in the following.

Coping With Exams

Some libraries have special services for students studying for finals. Many hold 24-hour services. Other ideas include bringing in therapy dogs and offering coffee and cookies. One library hosted a "stress busters" club and offered massages and other activities such as making holiday cards.

Next Steps

We followed up after the meeting by sending out a feedback survey to:

- Measure level of interest in future meetings
- Decide on format of future meetings
- Seek volunteers to help with planning and to host future meetings

We also presented a poster on the meeting at the 2014 annual NJLA conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Survey responders are interested in future meetings and would prefer a hybrid meeting format with some formal presentations along with the informal discussions that were held at the first meeting. Spring Break remains a popular time of the year to meet. One institution has already volunteered to help with the planning of and the possibility of hosting the next meeting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS