

## **Public Services Discussion Group**

ALA Annual

June 22, 2019 10:30am-11:30am

Washington Hilton, 1919 Connecticut Avenue NW (Van Ness Room)

Co-Conveners: Sara Logue and Isabel Planton

### Agenda

#### I. Introductions

#### II. Topic for Discussion:

a. Library renovation projects. Many special collections libraries are currently undergoing or preparing for major building renovations. In some cases the timeline for renovation is clear and widely published. In other cases, this information has not been determined yet but questions are already arising from patrons about access to materials for research and/or class sessions during the renovation period. How should public services staff prepare the public for major disruptions to library service? Or, how can staff best maintain current levels of service while operating out of a temporary work space? How can staff best cope with the stress of moving and disruption? Discussion may include questions from those who are preparing for a renovation and advice from those who are currently undergoing or have recently completed a renovation.

Number of attendees: 19

#### Patron Considerations

- Communicate to your internal community and the public as soon as possible
- When possible, close during less traffic times (summer or winter breaks)
- There will be a reputation loss if you are unable to provide adequate service. Be proactive and offer only what is actually possible.

#### Collection Considerations

- Take the time to properly house your collections so they can safely move
- Consider hiring outside vendors to barcode and complete the actual move
- Involve preservation office early to help prepare collections
- Be sure your collections are valued appropriately
- To close or not to close:
  - Try to continue service when possible in creative ways (satellite programming, remote reference, facsimile instruction sessions)
  - Assess the collections to see if they can be properly served during a renovation
  - Take into consideration the expectations of researchers as well as donors
  - Users may help as advocates for closing the building since this would speed up the renovation
  - Pack collections strategically in case you can try to make portions accessible for instruction or student research

## Stakeholders

- Involve security and risk management from campus
- Get the right people to tour your collections so they understand what is being moved and how the building needs to function properly in the future
- Getting in the room with the right people to make your case is hard. Look to other institutions who might have done this in the past to seek ideas about memos or proposals. Try to find an advocate who is higher up in the administration.
- Find senior staff members or colleagues throughout your institution's system who have tenure or other level of job security who can advocate on your behalf

## Service and Staffing

- Be realistic about the levels of service you can continue to provide
- Document the work you currently do and how much time additional duties will take.
- Try to hire temporary workers
- If the expectation is to stay at the same level of service, institutions need to support this.
- Track time at the task level. Create a picture of how staff spend their time. Use assessment to demonstrate that what the institution is asking is not humanly possible.
- Try to figure out what services you can stop offering during renovation and planning. Something has to give.
- Supervisors and staff should understand the list of priorities. It's not possible to do everything. What needs to be handled immediately, and what can wait? Ask for help prioritizing your work.
- Don't set yourself on fire to keep others warm. Have limits and model it for your staff.
- If you've hit your limit, let the problems show, let things fail, so administrators see that there is a limit.
- Stop hazing. Just because something was difficult for you, don't keep it difficult for the next employee if it can be made easier.