Public Services Discussion Group

Attendees: Julia Gardner (University of Chicago) – co-convener, Sarah Horowitz (Haverford College) – co-convener, Stella Richardson (Georgia Tech), Denita Hampton (Georgia State), Sara Logue (Princeton), Cindy Krolikowski (Wayne State), Lois White (Getty Research Institute), Derek Musley (Auburn Ave. Research Library), Aisha Johnson-Jones (University of North Florida), Curtis Small (University of Delaware), Anne Bahde (Oregon State University), Lisa Conathan (Yale), Mary Lacy (Library of Congress), Heather Smedberg (UC San Diego), Melanie Myers (Center for Jewish History), Elspeth Healey (University of Kansas), Lois Fischer Black (Lehigh University), Cynthia Becht (Loyola Marymount University), Maria Fernandez (University of Texas at Austin), Kim Tully (Temple), Susan Walker (Yale), Moira Fitzgerald (Yale), Robin Katz (UC Riverside)

Topic 1: Surveying (or other forms of assessment) of reading room or remote users -- what works and what doesn't, results of such surveys, how data impacted any decisions or changes made.

Susan Walker, Walpole library noted that they have an assessment librarian and have started using Qualtrics, which is more robust than Survey Monkey, and it ise asy to design different types of questions. The assessment librarian says that it is important to number questions and use a progress bar for long surveys, so people know they are getting somewhere. You should send out emails mid morning on Tuesday or Wednesday as they are more likely to get done and not lost. Information on what the survey is about, and whether or not it is anonymous, should be up front, as should big essay questions, so people still excited to answer them.

It is important to put like topics/questions with like.

Who else is using Qualtrics?

Haverford uses it for instruction surveys

Yale uses Qualtrics to survey information about website. They are trying to come up with what the target audience is and asking people about what they are trying to do on website and exploring demographics. This survey has not yet gone out.

Various attendees commented that at the end of a survey people like to talk about the facility -- too cold, chairs too hard, etc. even if this is not the topic of the survey. It is often where people elaborated most, and it's important to give space so that people will be able to comment on more than just reference service, the collection, etc.

Has anyone asked if people understand reasons for our rules?

Center for Jewish history gets lots of push-back on rules, but probably because it is public. A lot of push-back on bags often comes from the space design, as tables in the reading room are too far from the lockers.

By the time people get to the reading room they have jumped through many hoops – how can we try to talk about these things differently in the future, especially in instruction?

Are there specific questions you have asked that has yielded good results or led to changes?

Oregon State did a survey on hours asking "when do you use the library?" and "if special collections was open at X time, would you come in?" The got lots of responses, and data indicated that people wanted them to be open in early evenings. They changed their hours, but have had almost no traffic.

Chicago also got staying open later as the number one response on what service people wanted during a survey.

Some repositories have a survey question on registration form asking "how did you hear about us?" Walpole and Chicago noted that this is almost always word of mouth. The question was then raised of how this might be translated into ambassadors or some type of outreach, and the importance of using researchers for outreach.

Surveys can also be a problem, such as when a library does a survey that does not specifically include special collections, and this is then used as evidence of the fact that people aren't interested, since they did not mention it. Attendees also mentioned that in some institutions, they are not allowed to do their own survey, so it's important to have strategies to get onto other people's surveys.

This lead to a discussion about the importance of outreach to library staff in order to form partnerships. Some attendees had done programs for liaison/subject librarians. The Center for Jewish history did a program for their development department.

Topic 2: Feedback to the Primary Source Literacy Trask Force – An opportunity to discuss primary source literacy with the task force as it prepares to work on revisions.

Feedback primarily centered on the desire for practical guidance for those teaching day-to-day, including developing learning outcomes or example learning outcomes, copyright information, and teaching information.

The attendees thanked outgoing co-convener Julia Gardner; Melanie Meyers is the incoming co-convener.