Ivies Plus 2012
Track C, Friday AM: "Providing Service, Enforcing Policies"

How do we balance providing excellent customer service against the need to enforce policies? We discussed this question in the context of four policies (food, security, fines/fees, recalls), with additional discussion about good signage and policy enforcement.

Food
Do you have limits/prohibitions on food? If so, why?
- Smell/noise – eating disturbs other patrons.
  - Generally, if the smell is bad enough to disturb one person (who then complains), it's probably also disturbing other people in the vicinity.
- Preservation of collections (although many of our colleagues in preservation say, "patrons eat around the books at home")
- Pest control
- Facilities upkeep: avoiding beverage stains on chairs, etc.
- Trash: libraries allowing food reported a need for bigger trash cans and more frequent trash pickup
- Cultural expectations from other patrons to maintain a scholarly/traditional library environment
  - On the other hand, sometimes we get pressure from the parent institution (e.g., business school or law school) to relax our policies for the comfort of the students.

Food policies ranged from "no food, period" to "no smelly food" (or "cold food only") to no restrictions at all. On some campuses, food policies varied among branches, drawing patrons to study in the more permissive locations. Many libraries now incorporate a café and/or furniture layouts that encourage eating ("diner booths") so it's difficult to completely prohibit food.

How do you enforce the food policy? Any tips?
- Users are generally pretty cooperative at putting food away if requested (but staff have to ask).
- Some institutions have security guards that rove around and ask students to put food away (in addition to enforcing other policies). Other libraries don't have a specific "rover" but library staff are expected to say something as they go to and fro in the course of their duties.
- New renovations at some locations have caused students to take a great deal of pride in maintaining the building, so there's a lot of self-policing.
- Having a designated "eating space" or "food permitted zone" inside the library helps, because we can give users an alternative.

Security and Unauthorized Access
Are you open to the public? How do you balance community access with preventing non-research use of the library?
- Some libraries are open to the public, but have very broad policies covering appropriate behavior and library conduct (including personal hygiene)
- It's difficult to distinguish between members of the public truly doing research, and people who just want a place to sleep.
  - There's some things we can do at entry control (for example, asking people about their research interest) but we also want to avoid profiling.
- One library reported being open to the public, but not having a large influx of community members due to a tucked-away location. However, several times we've watched community members use our facilities to blatantly violate copyright (ripping CDs, copying scores, etc.) – it's hard to turn a blind eye to this.

What measures are you taking to prevent thefts in the library?
- Access control via turnstiles, cardswiped doors, etc.
  - Problem: students will often hold doors open for their friends
- ID verification: students who forget their ID have to present another form of photo ID, and the guard takes their picture. (We keep pictures for a few days, then discard.)
- Thefts have increased at one library, possibly due to "word on the street" about unguarded cell phones and laptops. It's made us strongly consider putting in turnstiles and controlling access.
- Roving security guards throughout library building
  - Guards help, but are not a panacea – we still experience thefts
  - If the guard sees an unattended laptop, they will lock it (with laptop cables they carry), and leave a note: "we saw this laptop was unlocked – please come to circulation and we will unlock it."
  - At one campus, our police said don't both with cables – professional thieves carry pocket-sized bolt cutters that can easily cut through the cable.
- Circulating laptop cables for patron use
  - Minor problem: students now using laptops to reserve seats
- Even if the library has a 24 hour space, asking patrons to leave and re-enter (with an ID check) if they are staying past building closing.
- Develop a good relationship with campus police – possibly invite them to the library to give a presentation on security to library staff (or students).
  - One library/police department developed a workshop: "this is a library, not your home" that was well-attended by patrons.
  - "Laptop registration drives" – where the police come to the library and offer to register laptops.

Library Fines
Are libraries doing away with per-day fines?
- Most libraries don't charge per-day overdue fines on regular materials.
  - Special status items (reserve, recalls) usually still have a per-day overdue charge.

- Instead, most libraries will (after a given time) mark the book as "lost" and impose some combination of:
  - Suspending borrowing privileges (allows for a conversation when the patron next needs to check out a book)
  - Charging replacement fees

Item replacement fees – how much do you charge? What are the specifics?
- Many libraries charge a flat fee per item (often open to later negotiation).
  - Some fees set according to subject (science/art books tend to be more expensive)
  - Other fees set according to format (book, CD, DVD, etc)
- Charging only the specific replacement cost (for example, fee = Amazon list price) sends the wrong message (that the library is a bookstore) and forces us to eat processing costs of re-cataloging and shelving.
  - On the other hand, a standard/flat fee may be less than the list price – we have seen some patrons "lose" very expensive textbooks then "find" them at the end of the semester.
- If the lost book is returned, or a replacement provided, libraries will waive some (but not all) of the fee – explained as cost-recovery.
  - One library will also reimburse lost fees if the book is later found/recovered within 6 months.

Can patrons pay fines/fees online and/or with credit cards?
- Users seems to strongly prefer paying library charges online. Many users would like us to accept "campus cash" for library fines.
- Most libraries would like to accept credit cards, but the infrastructure isn't always in place. Some institutions will take credit cards for central University payments (=tuition), and libraries are trying to get fines/fees to appear on University bills.
  - Libraries which accept credit cards seem to be eating the transaction fees (in any case, not passing along to users).

Do you use collection agencies or other measures for delinquent borrowers?
- Some libraries are using collection agencies – especially if the university has an in-house department performing this function or an existing relationship with an agency.
  - Generally tends to be a last-ditch measure taken after several letters/emails.
  - A similar option: transferring delinquent accounts to the university bursar so that charges appear on tuition bills.
- Faculty payment of fines/fees is difficult to enforce:
  - Often parent institution will not allow library to garnish paychecks, charge research accounts, etc.
  - Smaller/department branches will often bend the rules (or advocate such) for "their" faculty: e.g., renewing faculty books automatically before they become overdue, or asking for fine waivers on behalf of their faculty members.
- Graduating students are another difficult group, because they can usually renew books past their graduation date, and so have left campus before their books become overdue and we communicate with them.

- Some libraries allow patrons to "claim" lost books as returned (in which case fines are waived) -- but allow a maximum of 1-2 "free" claims, then the patron has to pay for the lost book.

Recalls
Can patrons recall books?
- Patrons usually enjoy have unlimited (or near-unlimited) renewals and often will just let books sit on the shelf. So it's hard to completely get rid of recalls, even though we encourage patrons to use BorrowDirect/ILL.
- Many remaining recalls are course-related (for reserve).
- Having a "maximum items out" limit (240 concurrent items) can be useful – allows us to have conversations with patrons (do you really need all those items right now?)

Policy Signage and Enforcement
How do you communicate policies to patrons? Any language/wording tips?
- Good language is one of the biggest hurdles – we know what we want to say, but having language that makes sense, doesn't leave huge loopholes, yet is still welcoming is difficult.
- Keep signs simple. (There's only so much language you can put on a sign.)
    - Don't expect patrons to read signs
- Use infographics and welcoming text (prescriptive, not prohibitive).
- Be consistent (in policies and signage) across libraries and branches.
- We involved students and faculty in developing policy language and signage: "what makes sense to you? What wording would be best?"

Who enforces the policies? If library staff are responsible for enforcement, how do you empower and support their decisions?
- A few libraries give library staff an alternative for situations they feel uncomfortable with (e.g., female staff having to approach a threatening male patron) – find a supervisor or call police.
- We'd prefer police enforce policies, but it can take 20 minutes or longer for them to respond.
- Dealing with issues that don't fall neatly under the stated policies is difficult. Library staff going "off book" can apply policies inconsistently.
- We tell student employees to get a full-time staff member – don't enforce policies themselves.
- One library has developed staff training that includes scenarios and roleplaying, which has been helpful.
- We had an initiative to promote a scholarly environment within the library, which has really helped.
    - It took around six months to hash out the policy and get everyone on board, and another six months to roll out signage, communication, training, etc.

- o Policy has to be supported from the top – the library administration has to buy into the policy and its enforcement.
- One library said they have almost resorted to automatic ILL if a book is checked out by a faculty member (because they don't respond to recalls).