Pizza with a Side of Outreach: Re-Invigorating Library Outreach at Distance Campuses

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Re-Invigorating Library Outreach at Distance Campuses

Utah State University is a large land-grant institution serving over 16,000 students across twenty distance campuses and centers. As the majority of these campuses are without physical libraries, informing students they have access to library services has proven tricky.

Planning successful library open houses has been a learning process. Here’s what we’ve found to be key to success:

1. **Timing is key**
   - Pick a busy night and time range

2. **Better incentives**
   - Results in better attendance

3. **Make it relevant**
   - Highlight resources specific to their majors

Prior to Fall 2016, despite these efforts, the library failed to reach students. Therefore, the majority of distance students remained unaware that they had access to library resources and failed to receive critical information literacy assistance.

In Fall 2016, we began hosting library open houses at our Regional Campuses (RC). In collaboration with our RC administrators and student government, these events serve as an ice-breaker for interactions between librarians and students. They raise awareness of library resources and services and ease anxiety about reaching out to the library for assistance, while providing food as an incentive to meet with us.

Over the last year, the library has hosted 12 open houses at eight USU locations, reaching nearly 1,000 students. These events have led to an increase in the number of distance students approaching subject librarians for assistance and stronger relationships with administrators at distance campuses.

Secret Sauce

Planning successful library open houses has been a learning process. Here’s what we’ve found to be key to success:

- **Timing is key**: Pick a busy night and time range
- **Better incentives**: Results in better attendance
- **Make it relevant**: Highlight resources specific to their majors
- **Market, market, market**: Get the word out via multiple channels well in advance
- **Be outgoing**: Ask outgoing students lots of questions and make a connection!

User Reviews

- "The one-on-one introductions to the library were beneficial. I learned about resources actually relevant to me."
- "The open houses set a tone and sends a message that our Logan campus cares about our regional campus students."
- "It was cool to meet my subject librarian. I had no idea this existed!"

Open House Receipts

Over the last year, the library has hosted 12 open houses at eight USU locations, reaching nearly 1,000 students. These events have led to an increase in the number of distance students approaching subject librarians for assistance and stronger relationships with administrators at distance campuses.

*The numbers above represent the number of students reached at each campus.*

**Open House Ingredients**

1. **Students**
2. **Incentives**
3. **Buy-In From Stakeholders**
4. **Marketing**
5. **Librarians On Site**

**Open House Ingredients**

- **Figure 1: USU Regional Campuses across the State**
- **Campus Visits**
- **Emails & Digital Marketing**
- **Instruction Sessions**
- **Online Learning Objects**
- **Post Marketing**
- **In-person Marketing**

**Figure 1: USU Regional Campuses across the State**

- **Blanding**: 105
- **Brigham City**: 120
- **Kaysville**: 41
- **Orem**: 61
- **Price**: 300
- **Salt Lake City**: 81
- **Tooele**: 52
- **Vernal**: 42

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