Cultivating Public Service Competencies in Student Employees: A Case Study

Sarah Harrington[a*], Nancy Lewis[a] and Nicole Brown[a]

[a]Library, University of California, Berkeley, USA

*sarah.harrington@library.ca.gov

Note: Sarah Harrington is now a Research Librarian at the California State Library.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of this project. Mark Marrow, the Head of Access Services, provided the initial idea for the training and helped reinforce the value of the training to the other Access Services units. Besides the authors, the training program was also shaped by Lynn Jones, Vincent Kang, and Corliss Lee. Thank you to all the Access Services student supervisors who coordinated with their students, and of course, all the student employees who helped shape the training and who serve as the face of the library every day.

ORCID ID's

- Sarah Harrington http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1357-9459
- Nancy Lewis https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4250-240X
- Nicole Brown https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5860-9295

Cultivating Public Service Competencies in Student Employees: A Case Study

How can we best train student employees for public service roles? At UC Berkeley, as in many academic libraries, a student employee is the first person that a user will see when entering the library; they are the “face of the library.” A positive interaction will set a positive tone for the user’s library experience, while a negative interaction may discourage the user from ever visiting the library again. As such, it is critical to prepare student staff with the competencies to engage positively with library users and feel confident in their roles. This paper shares a case study of a public services training piloted for Access Services student employees at UC Berkeley.

Keywords: public services, customer service, training, student employees, staff development, active learning

Introduction

At the Main Library complex at UC Berkeley, users interact primarily with student staff at Info Desks situated at the entrances and at the Circulation Desks. Student workers often come into their library jobs with very little professional experience, and yet they are expected to serve as the “face of the library.” We believe that explicit instruction in public service behaviors is extremely important. Our student employees act as representatives for the library, even though they may have little or no experience in a public service setting. By teaching them public service, we are setting the stage for users to have positive impressions of the library, and for the student employees to feel more confident and comfortable in their roles.

Further, student supervisors evaluate student employees based on their ability to interact with patrons. We need to define public service behaviors both to help our students learn them and also as a means to fairly evaluate them. For example, in the PSERT training, we discuss the importance of eye contact as a way to show interest and availability. However, some cultures see eye contact as confrontational, and some student employees may have been raised to not make eye contact as a signal of respect. If an employee does not know that making eye contact is the default expectation in the library setting, they may be judged unfairly by supervisors.

To improve user experiences, the Access Services Division and Instruction Services Division teamed up to create the “Public Services and Effective Referrals Training” (PSERT). The goal of this training program is to increase core competencies in public service and basic reference skills for public facing student employees in the Access Services Division using the RUSA guidelines as a touchstone. The PSERT training helps to establish a consistent skill set among student workers. Our training has two overarching goals: 1) to prepare students for both positive and negative interactions with the public, and 2) to familiarize students with the information resources available through the library.

The first goal, preparing students for positive and negative interactions with the public, is critical for student employee success, retention, and patron satisfaction. The first overarching section of the PSERT training addresses public service behaviors. To set the stage for positive interactions with patrons, we teach the RUSA Guidelines. Then, we acknowledge that not all interactions go as planned and give them tools to handle difficult situations.

The second goal, familiarization with library resources, establishes a consistent skill set, empowers students to use library services for themselves, and helps them connect fellow students to resources. We start the research tools section with a broad overview of library resources available - over 12 million books, 110,000 serials subscriptions, and 24 libraries - to emphasize to students that there is no way for them to know everything, and we do not expect them to know everything. We give them knowledge about the basic tools offered by the libraries and teach them how and when to contact a reference librarian when they get stuck.

Besides establishing community expectations and a common skill set, a tertiary goal of the program is to ensure efficiency in student training. Each 1.5 hour long session contains an average of 15 student employees. If the students were trained on these topics individually in their respective units, then unit supervisors would be spending 22.5 hours total for all 15 of those students to receive the same training. An additional benefit of the standardized group training is that students from different units learn from one another and come to understand public-facing units share many of the same goals when serving our patrons.

Literature Review

Universities aim to empower students with competencies they will need in the workplace post-graduation. In our roles as library supervisors, we have certainly encountered student employees who leave their library jobs so they can focus on their studies. However, we wholeheartedly agree with Meyer and Torreano's stance that, "Librarians and library staff have a tremendous opportunity to contribute to the professional growth of the students they employ." (2017, p. 39). Some libraries, like the Access Services Department at the Indiana University Southeast, actively tailor student training to prepare students with the National Association of Colleges and Employers core competencies (Proctor, 2020). If supervisors invest time and energy into their students, student employment can be a valuable piece of the puzzle to help foster career readiness.

Libraries and other public service settings require that employees acquire soft skills like communication and emotional intelligence to increase user satisfaction. The Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) developed its Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers "to identify and recommend observable behavioral attributes that could be correlated with positive patron perceptions of reference librarian performance" (2008). The RUSA Guidelines, originally developed in 1996, remain an industry standard for best practices for user services.

Though the RUSA Guidelines are often the starting point for public services training, library training programs reflect a wide variety of techniques to teach these behaviors to public-facing employees. Twenty years ago, Kathman and Kathman wrote an article detailing best practices for training student employees, including “well-written job descriptions and performance measures, job orientation to the library, specific training for the duties to be performed, and the evaluation of the training program” (2000). Today, the conversation about how best to train student employees is still highly relevant. McKenna recently published a piece emphasizing the importance of: “(a) a student worker training assessment, (b) explicit student worker policies, (c) an annual mandatory training session, (d) online training, (e) a focus on student worker retention, and (f) unique student worker roles” (2020). It seems that a triangulation of methods may be the most effective for training student employees.

When designing a student training program, it is important to know how other institutions address similar challenges. The University of Maryland Libraries created a blended training with in-person and online elements and awarded a digital badge to employees that completed the training (Ippoliti, 2014; Epps, Kidd, Nego & Sayles, 2016). The Gerald M. Quinn Library at Fordham University created an in-person training program for students and utilized interactive presentation techniques to keep students engaged (Becker-Redd, Lee, & Skelton, 2018). The University of Illinois Springfield's Brookens Library uses a multi-phase training process that includes orientation, shadowing, mastery checks, and ongoing development at staff meetings. (Hoag & Sagmoen, 2017). Training programs for student employees vary by department to department and institution to institution.

Even within the UC Berkeley Libraries, our division was not the first to produce a training program for public services. In the Social Sciences Division, librarians held two training sessions per year to orient students to public services and teach them basic reference skills (D. Eifler, personal communication, April 26, 2016). They held one training at the beginning of the academic year to orient all student employees to the landscape of the library and teach public services skills. In February, they held an optional training for students who wanted to learn more about how to research a topic using library tools. The Social Sciences Division model set the stage for our pilot program.

While we worked on a pilot for the Main Library, the Library’s Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) Division created a similar training for their student employees. The EPS Division conducted a month-long audit of common questions from its five service points and coded them to identify common questions. They used these common questions to write a reference manual and create a training for student employees (Loo, Quigley, Ngo, Powell & Teplitzky, 2015). Following in the footsteps of the EPS Division, we decided to conduct an audit of all patron questions asked at the service desks to get a better understanding of what our student employees needed to know.

Many resources stressed the importance of identifying competencies and learning outcomes and then designing a program to support the defined outcomes. When designing our training, we drew from backward design principles outlined by Wiggins and McTighe. Wiggins and McTighe assert that, “Our lessons, units, and courses should be logically inferred from the results sought, not derived from the methods, books, and activities with which we are most comfortable" (2005, p. 14). We defined our learning outcomes and then worked backwards to create a training program to teach our goals.

Multiple articles have documented the effectiveness of active learning techniques on retention and understanding of material. For example, Phillips and Grose-Fifer (2011) describe a Performance Enhanced Interactive Learning (PEIL) workshop model, in which students create presentations and discuss content with each other. Through group learning workshops, students increased the depth of student learning and retention of organic chemistry concepts. Similarly, Phipps (2019) applied team-based interactive learning activities to accounting courses and found that small group team activities increased participation and allowed students to make deeper connections with the material and teach each other. We applied these same active learning techniques to design a training session relevant to student library employees.

Origin Story

The idea for this training initially originated from a negative experience that a user had with a student employee some time ago. Allegedly, the user came in and asked the student at the Info Desk how to access the catalog and the student blanked. The user wrote a complaint to the University Librarian. We never identified the student employee in question. Was it someone new? Did they not realize that "OskiCat" is the UC Berkeley equivalent to "catalog"? Did the user say "card catalog," which sounded unfamiliar to the student? Nevertheless, it was abundantly clear that we needed to give our student employees the tools to do their jobs. The Access Services Manager asked the Information Desks Manager (also in Access Services) and the Reference Coordinator to come up with a training program for public-facing library student employees. In the UC Berkeley Library system, one of the goals outlined in the strategic plan is to "Grow as a learning organization" (Strategic Plan, n.d.). The Library is dedicated to continuous improvement, and we were supported to embrace the challenge of improving our student training.

The first iteration of the training arose from an existing training program coordinated by the Library's Social Sciences Division. Initially, the Information Desks Supervisor and Reference Coordinator obtained and modified the slides from this existing training to meet the needs of student employees working in the Main Library complex.

The Information Desks Supervisor and the Reference Services Coordinator launched the original program for the Information Desks student employees in Summer 2016. The Information Desks, located at each entrance of the Main library complex, provide basic directions and information to users, in addition to providing security functions like checking ID's, monitoring book alarms, and enforcing building policies. Information Desks student employees proved to be an ideal starting ground for the training program as they have the opportunity to make a first impression on library users and must navigate the balance between being polite and firmly enforcing policies.

After each of the three pilot sessions, we reserved time at the end to ask for feedback on the session. The students were forthcoming and provided valuable feedback on how to improve the training during the group discussions. In Fall 2016, the training opened up to include the Circulation Unit in addition to the Information Desks Unit. Throughout the pilot, the Information Desks Supervisor took ownership of the public service section in addition to the coordination with attendees, and the Reference Coordinator presented the section about navigating key search tools.

The training grew by leaps and bounds in Fall 2017, thanks to staff movement and our goal to increase participation in the training. The Head of Access Services asked that we expand the reach of the training to all public-facing Access Services units, and we aimed to do so in Fall 2017. The new iteration of the training was simply titled, “Access Services Division Student Library Employee Training.”

In anticipation of the expanded audience, the daytime Circulation Student Supervisor joined the team of presenters in Fall 2017 and contributed perspectives from his team. Meanwhile, the Reference Coordinator retired, and we gained an interim librarian who also added a fresh perspective to the presentation. Soon enough, the new Head of the Instruction Services Division replaced the interim librarian. Meanwhile, the daytime Circulation supervisor left Berkeley after the Fall 2017 sessions, and we gained a new student supervisor to the PSERT team who had experience supervising students at two different units within Access Services (Circulation and Newspapers / Microforms). The team today includes the Information Desks Supervisor, the Head of Circulation, and the Head of Instruction Services. To date, three student supervisors and three librarians have presented this training, each adding value from their own experiences. Also, the librarian convener role shifted from being a co-presenter to being more behind the scenes to help with the development and refinement of the session. This provides a professional development opportunity for Access Services staff to develop instruction skills and allows student supervisors to take ownership of training for their own employees.

Methods

Develop Learning Outcomes

We adapted the original training from the Social Sciences Division, and quickly realized that we needed to develop our own learning objectives that would better address the needs of students at our service points. Compared to the Social Sciences Division, service points in the Access Services Division are open longer hours, manage a heavier flow of traffic, and are expected to know information pertaining to the Main Library complex.

We used the backward design principles outlined by Wiggins and McTighe to develop learning outcomes for the program. Wiggins and McTighe argue, "Only by having specified the desired results can we focus on the content, methods, and activities most likely to achieve those results," this approach is "*results*-focused design" rather than "*content*-focused design" (2015, p. 15). Backward design involves starting with the end in mind, and involves three distinct stages:

- Stage 1: Identify desired results - articulate what students need to "know, understand, and be able to do" (p. 17)
- Stage 2: Determine acceptable evidence - "How will we know if students have achieved the desired results? What will we accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?" (p. 18)
- Stage 3: Plan learning experiences and instruction - "What activities will equip students with the needed knowledge and skills? What will need to be taught and coached, and how should it best be taught, in light of performance goals? What materials and resources are best suited to accomplish these goals? (p. 19)

In Stage 1, we needed to gain a deeper understanding of the types of questions that the student employees receive while staffing the Info Desks. To do this, we conducted an audit of all user questions asked at the service desks to get a better understanding of what our student employees needed to know. We asked the student employees to record every question asked for a sample week in October 2017 and a sample week in December 2017. Students used a Google Form to answer "What was the patron's question?" and indicate their unit. To identify overlapping needs, we conducted the questions audit across all Access Services public-facing units. The service points included three Circulation desks, five Information Desk desks, the Newspaper Microform desk, and the Media Resources Center desk. At the conclusion of the audit, we reviewed the recorded patron questions to better understand the types of questions that students received. Some examples include:

- I tried to print and it said to synchronize my account, what do I do?
- I cannot find this book in the Stacks, can you find it for me?
- Can I borrow some pens?
- Do you have a heavy duty stapler?

In addition to reviewing the responses holistically, we also plugged in the text responses to a free word cloud tool available at wordclouds.com. We removed connecting words (use, and, or, etc) and combined similar words (print and printing). It automatically tallied the frequency of each word for us. This tool helped us identify common words and themes and created a word cloud to help visualize the most common questions received. From looking at the word cloud, we can easily see the words mentioned most frequently, including: bathroom, library, check, book, time, close, and print.

Figure 1: Sample of users' questions at the service desks

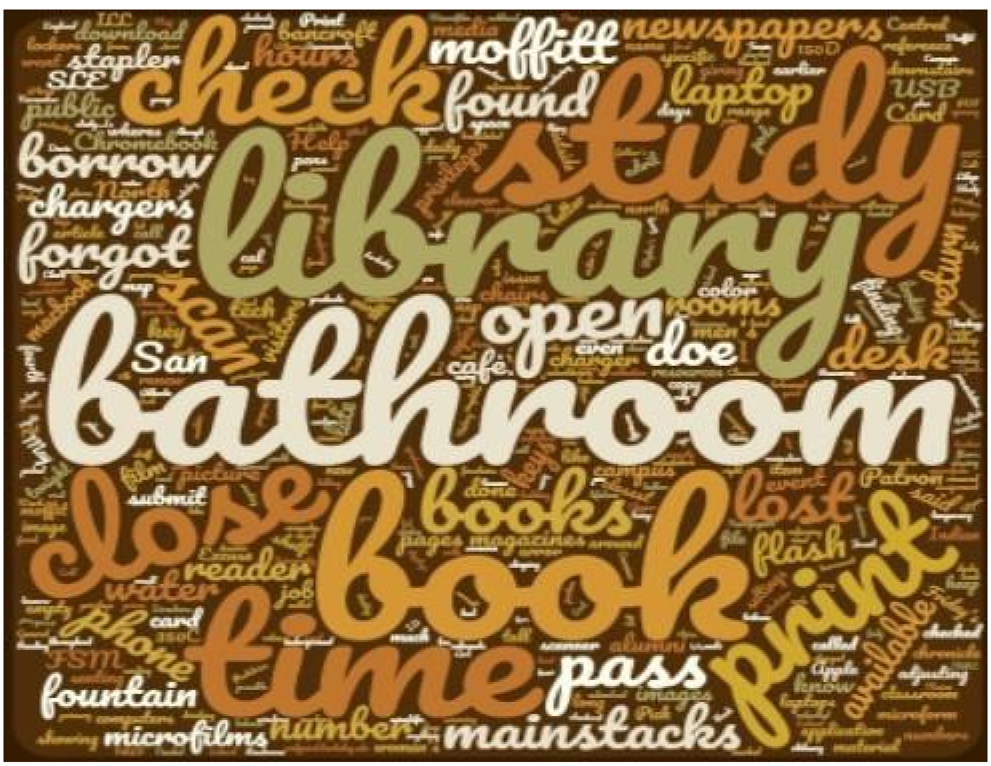

Figure 2: Word cloud showing common themes in patron questions

After conducting the audit, we developed the following PSERT learning outcomes.
Students will:

1. Apply RUSA Guidelines for Public Service.
2. Deploy techniques to de-escalate difficult situations.
3. Make effective referrals to supervisors, security, and librarians.
4. Navigate key search tools (Start Your Search, Oskicat, subject databases, WorldCat).
5. Identify ways to get research assistance (chat, email, appointments, in-person drop ins).

In Stage 2, we determined the criteria to see if the learning outcomes had been met. We designed a Google Form "Recap Quiz" and tied each question back to the learning outcomes. For example, to check that students know how to make effective referrals to supervisors and security, we use the following question: "When dealing with a difficult situation, which of the following are available as possible resources? (check all that apply)." By tying the assessment directly to the learning outcomes, we can see evidence that students understand the learning outcomes.

In Stage 3, we designed the training content to support each of the learning outcomes. Looking at our learning outcomes, we noticed that about half of them are centered around public service and half around library resources, so we organized the course into these two overarching topics. We included active learning activities to keep students engaged and facilitate retention of the content.

Course Content

Welcome & Ice Breaker

First we welcome the students to the 1.5 hour session, introduce ourselves, and give a general overview of what they will learn. We tell students upfront that we will ask for their active participation and use an ice breaker to get them talking. Each student gets a bingo card with common experiences shared by student employees, like "I've seen the dinosaur in front of the Bioscience Library." The participants must find people in the room who fit each category and have them initial the box. The first person to complete the whole card yells "Bingo!" and wins a small prize, either candy or an interesting trinket from a dollar store. In our experience, we feel that the Bingo icebreaker helps to warm up the room and increases students' willingness to participate later in the training. After the icebreaker, we introduce the learning outcomes so students know what they should be able to accomplish after the session.

Figure 3: PSERT Bingo card used during ice breaker

Public Service

The first three learning outcomes directly relate to public service behaviors. To prime students for this section, we start by using a framing activity to build empathy. We show a short video where the camera pans around a restaurant and focuses briefly on each person (Cathy, 2010). Next to each person, white text appears describing their backstory, like, "Single mom raising a family alone & trying to make ends meet" and "Parents divorced when he was 7, struggles to find acceptance and love." We ask students to shout out some stressors or experiences that college students may be grappling with, like moving away from home for the first time or struggling with finances. We show the video to remind students that patrons are complex and whole individuals and their lives extend beyond our interactions with them. If a patron is excessively confrontational about a policy, it is possible that something else is going on in their lives that is feeding into the conversation, unbeknownst to us. We ask students to approach patron interactions from a place of empathy.

Next, we pivot our focus to the first learning objective, applying Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers (Reference & User Services Association, 2008). For the first RUSA Guideline, Visibility/Approachability, the students watch two video segments, one showing a poor public service transaction and the other showing a positive transaction (North

Hall Library Mansfield University, 2011). Before watching the successful interaction, we ask students to brainstorm at their tables and send someone up to the whiteboard to write down what they think went wrong with the interaction. Next, we talk through the concepts of Interest and Listening/Inquiring, providing a description and examples of each, including a photo of the speaker displaying active listening body language. For the fourth RUSA Guideline, Searching, we have the students complete a searching exercise where they must pair up and search the library website for specific questions. The group that finishes first wins a small prize and comes to the front to show everyone how to find the answers. Allowing students to be trainers themselves further reinforces the retention of the material. Finally, we discuss the final Guideline, Follow up and explain why it is important to check in with the patron to see if they have further questions.

Then we transition to our next learning objective, deploying techniques to de-escalate difficult situations. In this section, we present two scenarios to the students. In the first, students receive the following prompt: "A man routinely shows up to your shifts, sits in the corner and stares at you. It feels like he is trying to get your attention although he does not talk to you." Students discuss the scenario in pairs to come up with possible solutions. Then we call the group back together to share solutions. This part of the presentation is often sombering because we explain that this scenario is a real life example that happened to one of the presenter's student employees. The student did not tell the supervisor and the supervisor only found out when the student resigned because of the patron's behavior. We reinforce to the student employees that their supervisors are here for them and that they should always report harassment so it can be addressed.

The second scenario is much more lighthearted. We ask for a brave volunteer and promise a small prize for participating. Then, we describe the activity. One of the presenters plays the role of a patron eating food in the Main Stacks (which is not allowed). The student needs to approach the patron to get them to stop eating inside the building. Again, we rely on the training the trainer approach, giving students the opportunity to practice new skills while teaching each other.

Navigating Search Tools

In the next section, we address learning outcomes 4 and 5: Navigate key search tools, and identify ways to get research assistance. To teach students about the library's search tools, we divide them into groups and assign each group one of the following tools: discovery layer, catalog, databases and WorldCat. We ask each group to perform a search for the phrase, "online privacy" and write down how many search results they received and the types of sources they discovered in the listings. We roam the room to ensure that each group is able to complete the exercise and will be able to report back to the group. Each group selects a representative to come to the front to teach everyone about their resource.

For the final learning outcome, we talk to the group about how to get research help. We previously used an exercise where students had to find resources on the website, but they seemed reluctant to shout out answers by the end of the long session. Now, we simply show the students where they can find contact options for our reference librarians. We discuss the difference between Access Services and Reference and explain that there is a whole group of people dedicated to helping navigate the library's search tools

Assessment

At the end of the training, we reserve time for the students to complete a check of their understanding. We use a Google Form quiz to determine if students gained the knowledge stated in the learning outcomes. At the start of each Fall semester, we send out the same quiz to find out if students retained the material over time.

Course Timing and Delivery

The Access Services Division at UC Berkeley typically employs over one hundred public-facing student employees at any given time. The goal is for every student to receive training.

Each semester, approximately two weeks before the training, the PSERT conveners send an email to Access Services unit supervisors reminding them that students are required to attend the training and asking them to invite their student employees. The conveners provide sample text to send to student employees in order to reduce the amount of effort needed by the unit supervisors. The students are asked to fill out an RSVP Google Form to indicate which session they will attend. The conveners check the RSVP periodically to ensure that all units received the invitation from their supervisors. The day before each training, we send an email to all of the students who RSVP'd to remind them of the upcoming session. On the day of the session, we pass around a sign in sheet to mark attendance, which we then share with the unit supervisors. Our highest attended session was in Fall 2017, when we opened up the training to all public-facing student employees in Access Services. We train an average of 27 students per semester.

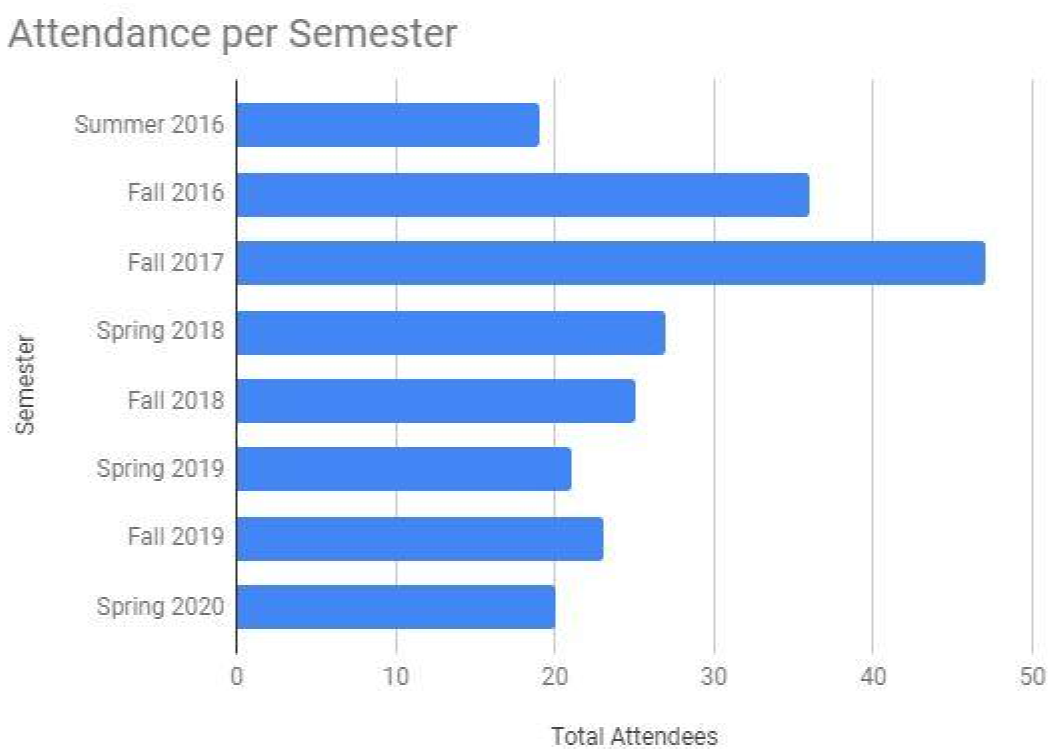

Figure 4: Bar graph showing attendance numbers for each semester

Initially, we aggressively pursued 100% student attendance. We touted the training as mandatory, paid students for their time, and fed students pizza and snacks (food typically cost around $230 per semester). We held sessions toward the beginning of the school year, within a two week timeframe, in the evenings from 5-6:30pm and during the day on a Saturday.

Over time, we embraced a more realistic stance for the long term success of the program by moving the sessions into the standard work day to better accommodate our own work schedules. Further, the library budget does not cover food costs for student trainings, so the conveners chose to suspend pizzas to avoid paying out of pocket each semester. We do buy small prizes from the Dollar Tree as a means to reward students for their active participation, but this feels like a more sustainable out of pocket expense.

Within the three sessions we held each semester, we noticed that there was almost always one session with low attendance (about five students), which was not an effective use of the presenters' time. In Spring 2020, we decided to drop one of the sessions to hold just two per semester for more effective use of staff time. After removing one session, twenty students attended across two sessions in Spring 2020, compared to twenty-one across three sessions the previous Spring. We were happy to discover that the same number of students attended the training despite the reduced number of sessions.

Figure 5: Bar graph showing number of attendees at each session

We also asked ourselves what times in the year would be most effective to reach the highest number of students. We sought out hiring data from our Human Resources department to see when most students were hired and aimed to place the training about a month after each semester's hiring peak. We chose one month later so student employees could get a basic sense of their positions so they could better understand the relevance of public service skills to their roles. We held the sessions in October for Fall semester and March for Spring semester.

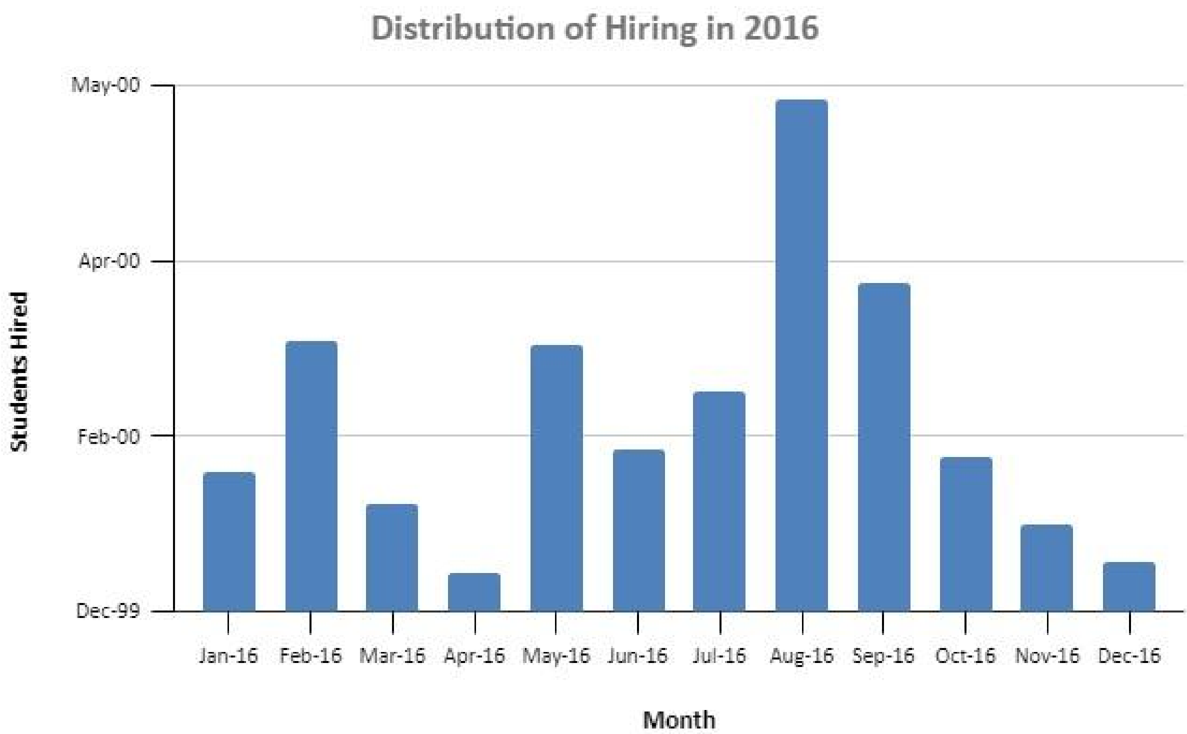

Figure 6: Bar graph showing the number of student hires each month

Results

Like with the rest of the training, our assessment practices evolved over time. The initial piloting sessions relied on verbal feedback. We later added PollNow questions to check for understanding during the presentation. Next we collected pre and post session quiz answers via a paper form that we manually tallied afterwards. And finally, we settled on the Google Forms "Recap," where students do a check for understanding immediately after the session, and then again at the start of each Fall semester to review the session content.

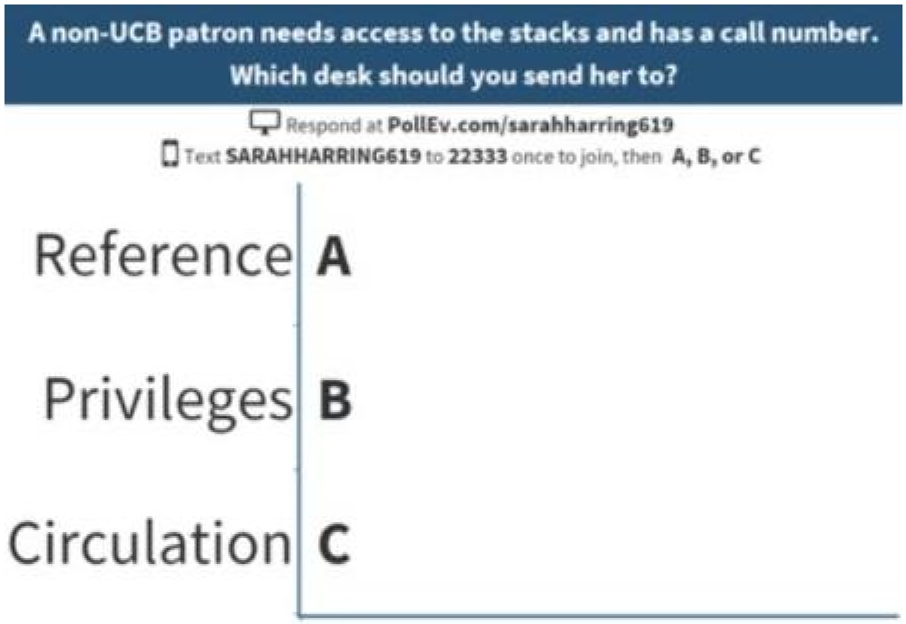

Figure 7: PollNow screenshot

In Fall 2017, when we had just opened up the training to all of Access Services, we asked students to complete a pre-session and post-session quiz to see if they gained knowledge from the training. The 53 students trained during the Fall 2017 semester showed improvements in understanding the stated learning objectives.

In Spring 2018, we collected only post-session responses in Spring 2018. Post-session responses helped to reveal areas that needed improvement in the training. We also gained a deeper understanding about the successes and limitations of the training by asking students to write down "What I learned" and "What I wish we had covered." The first figure here shows some of the feedback we received from student employees. For example, one student wrote that they learned that "you can search for specific databases by subject, type, etc." and another wished we would have covered "other locations of the different units." The accompanying graph shows a comparison between pre-test and post-test responses, with more students answering correctly after participating in training.

What I learned	What I wish we had covered
• That you can search for specific databases by subject, type, etcs. • How to use oskicat • UC elinks synced to google scholar • I didn't know about the 24/7 librarian help • Research guides!	• I wish that we would have covered other locations of the different units • What to do if students are super rude • Everything was great. • How to use Oskicat better? • If the library catalog includes musical scores!

Figure 8: Student responses to “What I learned” and “What I wish we had covered”

Figure 9: Bar graph showing pre-test responses compared to post-test responses

By Fall 2018, we felt confident in our recap questions and decided to use them consistently across sessions to lay foundation for future data comparison. Since Fall 2018, we have pre and post recap responses for 44 students out of the 223 students trained. Preliminary results suggest that the majority of students performed the same or better in subsequent sessions, although some students lose retention of the material over time. Students who performed better than their original score likely increased their competencies thanks to on-the-job experiences that aligned with and reinforced the training.

Discussion

Benefits of PSERT Model

The PSERT training is intended for all public-facing student employees. It cuts across traditional boundaries and silos, so students can learn from one another and incorporate their own experiences within their specific units. By participating in training along with other employees, students can better understand the shared goals between the units and see how their peers implement a public service mindset. Students interact with the material and with each other to better understand the course content.

Furthermore, our assessment method reinforces the lessons learned because student employees complete the recap at the start of each academic year, which reminds them of the importance of public service, allows them to review the learning outcomes, and opens the door for a conversation with their supervisor if they have any questions.

One of the best things about the PSERT training is that it has changed dramatically over time, thanks to our focus on continuous improvement and ongoing feedback from students and library employees. Due to attrition, we were lucky enough to garner involvement from a handful of student supervisors and a handful of librarians. The Instruction Librarians brought effective pedagogical practices to the sessions and the student supervisors brought their knowledge of their teams and "on the ground" expertise. Multiple instruction librarians sat in on the presentations to provide feedback for the sessions. Each person added value to the training by infusing it with their own experiences and perspectives.

Lessons Learned

Though continuous improvement is an important part of our process, we stumbled at the start of the program because we did not begin with clear learning goals for our own students. In a rush to get the program started, we borrowed content from an existing training from the Social Sciences Division of the UC Berkeley Libraries. We have also referenced the training materials from the Engineering & Physical Sciences Division. We inadvertently included a hodgepodge of slides that did not directly support our goals for the training. Eventually, we defined the learning outcomes and then sat down together and made sure that each section of the presentation directly supported our learning goals. For any group starting out, we would highly recommend developing learning outcomes first and then using backward design to ensure all content is relevant to the objectives.

We learned the hard way about the importance of making logistics easy on ourselves. Rather than bending over backwards to accommodate student scheduling preferences, we eventually settled on two sessions per semester during the normal workday. Students are typically able to attend one of the two sessions, and our attendance charts show that attendance remained stable. By keeping an ongoing attendance record, updated after each new session, we can easily identify students who have not yet completed the training and proactively remind them to attend.

Next steps

The PSERT Training is temporarily on hiatus while we navigate the post-COVID-19 world. At the time of this writing, the library's doors have been closed for seven months and we presently employ a small subset of our former student employees. The death toll has surpassed 1 million deaths globally due to the pandemic, and the U.S. has been forced to confront the realities of racial discrimination in our modern world. The Library is adapting services so they can be carried out safely, and is reexamining policies and procedures with a critical eye to promote equity and inclusion. While the training is paused, we have time to think about how the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism can shape our training.

COVID-19 has changed the very nature of our services. When student employees return to the library, we will face new challenges when interacting with patrons (for example, enforcing mask ordinances and capacity limits) and training procedures will likely need to change. We have always held this training in a large group setting, which is no longer a reasonable expectation as we return to the library. We will likely need to convert the training to an online format, at least temporarily. One challenge is that we will need to navigate translating the interactive components to a remote setting, perhaps using video conferencing features like Zoom breakout rooms. Of course, moving online also offers some new possibilities. In the past, if a student could not attend training, they needed to wait for it to be offered again the following semester. Now, we can easily record a session for students to watch later. We will continue our assessment strategies as we pilot the new iteration so the training can adapt to our new realities.

Furthermore, thanks to the Black Lives Matter Movement, the UC Berkeley Library has renewed its commitment to anti-racism. Implicit bias is very relevant to the work that our student employees do every day when interacting with the public. They need to be trained to be mindful of their biases so they do not show up at work, either as unwarranted exceptions or unfair assumptions about patrons or team members. We are in the process of deciding how to incorporate implicit bias training into the PSERT training.

The PSERT training makes a difference for our student employees; it helps students retain public service skills and learn how to navigate electronic resources. We can see their progress in the results from the assessment; we can see it in the students' levels of confidence; we can see it in the services provided to patrons. The training isn't perfect, but nothing is. With continued efforts to improve, and some missteps along the way, our students will be better prepared to take on the challenging task of public service in these challenging times.

References

Becker-Redd, K., Lee, K., & Skelton, C. (2018). Training student workers for Cross-Departmental Success in an Academic Library: A New Model. *Journal of Library Administration*, *58*(2), 153–165. https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2017.1412711

Cathy, D. (2010). *Every life has a story* [Chick-fil-A training video]. Retrieved August 17, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2v0RhvZ3lvY

Epps, S., Kidd, J., Negro, T., & Sayles, S. (2016). *Rethinking customer service training: A curricular solution to a familiar problem. Journal of Access Services, 13*(3), 199–209. https://doi.org/10.1080/15367967.2016.1206476

Hoag, B. & Sagmoen, S. (2017). "Leading, Learning, and Earning: Creating a Meaningful Student Employment Program." In S. Arnold-Garza & C. Tomlinson (Eds.), *Students lead the library: The importance of student contributions to the academic library*.

Ippoliti, C. (2014). Are you being served? Designing the customer service curriculum. *Public Services Quarterly*, *10*(3), 177–192. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228959.2014.914864

Kathman, J. M., & Kathman, M. D. (2000). Training student employees for quality service. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *26*(3), 176. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0099-1333(00)00096-3

Loo, J., Quigley, B., Ngo, L., Powell, S., & Teplitzky, S. (2015). *Empowering the frontline: A dynamic online reference manual and training session for student library employee reference skills*. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/24m5v7ps

McKenna, J. (2020). So many students, so little time: Practical student worker training in an academic library. *Journal of Access Services*, *17*(2), 74–82.

Meyer, K., & Torreano, J. (2017). “The Front Face of Library Services: How Student Employees Lead the Library at Grand Valley State University.” In S. Arnold-Garza & C. Tomlinson (Eds.), *Students lead the library: The importance of student contributions to the academic library*.

North Hall Library Mansfield University. (2011). *Customer service training.* Retrieved October 21, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9zFoD8v4LQ&feature=emb_logo

Phillips, K. E. S., & Grose-Fifer, J. (2011). A performance enhanced interactive learning workshop model as a supplement for organic chemistry instruction. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, *40*(3), 90–98.

Phipps, T. (2019). Team-based interactive student learning for accounting courses. *Journal of Higher Education Theory & Practice*, *19*(6), 155–160.

Reference & User Services Association. (2008). *Guidelines for behavioral performance of reference and information service providers*. Retrieved September 17, 2020, from http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/guidelinesbehavioral

Strategic Plan. (n.d.). Stories of UC Berkeley Library. Retrieved October 22, 2020, from https://stories.lib.berkeley.edu/strategicplan/

Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (Expanded 2nd ed) [Electronic resource]. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/Doc?id=10081770