A Survey on Project 2000 Students' Opinions about Accessibility to the Nursing College Library

by Paul Moorbath
Senior Librarian, St. Bartholomew's College of Nursing and Midwifery

Introduction

As Project 2000 students are required to use the college library more than the previous RGN students, it is timely to consider what library service Project 2000 students themselves require.

Wakenham et al (in press) have undertaken a survey of nurses' use of the college library. Trevelyan (1992) in an anecdotal account noted the lack of library resources for nurses. Neither of these surveys considered the needs of Project 2000 students in particular.

Wakeham (1992a) found nurses wanted longer library opening hours and noted the problems of nurses on shifts but his survey was not aimed at Project 2000 students. Carlisle (1992) in an anecdotal survey found that tutors also considered library opening times to be not long enough. Other surveys e.g. by Bergmann (1985) of university students in general found they also wanted longer library opening hours. The COFHE (1990) Guidelines...p.9 suggested that the library should be open at least during teaching hours and if possible at weekends.

Wakeham (1992b) found that librarians of nursing colleges thought that the majority of their readers were seeking information for course work.

Method

A questionnaire was given to Project 2000 students asking them about when they used the Library and what opening times they wanted. At one college the survey was conducted during December 1991 and January 1992 and in the other college during February and March 1992. It was decided not to continue the surveys longer so as not to produce resentment and reader fatigue. The sample did include students on the branch part of Project 2000 but at the time of the survey there were no students nearing finals at any college.

A second survey was conducted asking about the reason for photocopying journals articles by placing a sheet by the photocopier in each college. Students using the copier were asked if the journals articles being

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copied were for a project or presentation.

Results

268 replies were received in the two colleges. Only replies from Project 2000 students were counted.

Question 1 asked if the respondents had come to find information for a specific piece of work or a presentation.

yes	no
220	48
(82%)	(18%)

Question 2 asked students about what type of day they were having.

In college/study day	149	(56%)
On a ward	57	(21%)
Off duty all day	62	(23%)

Students were asked to respond to the following questions only if they had not answered them previously and so the following responses are from different individuals. 174 replies were received in the two colleges.

Question 3 asked about what times they thought they would prefer to use the library on a day when they were in college and had lectures etc.

Early	Lunch-time
Before 9	12-2
(8%)	(40%)

After lectures	Evening
4-6	after 6
(50%)	(60%)

Question 4 asked about what times of day they thought they would prefer to use the library on an off duty day.

Early	Morning
before 9	9-12
4	74
(2%)	(43%)

Lunch-time	Afternoon
12-2	2-5
27	63
(16%)	(36%)

Late afternoon	Evening
5-6	After 6
(25%)	(53%)

Question 5 asked students where they would prefer to write an essay assuming that there were enough room in the library.

In own room	95	(55%)
In library	66	(38%
No preference	13	(7%)

Photocopier survey On a sheet by the photocopier, students were asked if the article they were copying was for use in a marked piece of work or a presentation.

yes	no
187	18
(91%)	(9%)

Conclusions

Both surveys showed that the overwhelming majority of Project 2000 students visit the library to find information for marked work and projects rather than background reading and this confirms Wakeham's (1992b) findings. It could be that students do not photocopy articles for private reading but the copier survey results are roughly similar to the general library use survey.

As might be expected, the majority of students use the library on a college day but nearly a quarter of readers came in on an off duty day - presumably to do work on an assignment.

The total percentages in the questions on preferred times of use came to over 100 as some respondents indicated more than one preferred time. Over half the respondents wanted the library open after 6pm on both college and off duty days. However, there is no certainty that the students would actually use the library in the evening. However, libraries may be driven to consider late evening opening to cater for the needs of part-time students on higher award courses. Relatively few students want to use the library before 9am. Overall, there seems to be a preference to use the library in the afternoon. Although respondents were given a free choice of times for their preferred times of use on off duty days, very few indicated that they would wish to use the library all day.

About 40% of respondents would wish to use the library for writing up an essay. Students had been asked to assume that there was enough space and this was for actual writing not just finding books and journals. Three respondents commented on noise and disturbance. Neither of the two college libraries have a separate entrance lobby and this means that the issue desks are in the main library and so this is a valid point. Modern librarians try to avoid going round the library hushing readers up. There might well be a need for a separate reading room.

It is not possible to draw firm conclusions about the amount of seating space needed, but if 40% of students really do want to use their library for writing up, it seems that many libraries would need more seating accommodation and enough space for each reader to spread out.

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