Developing a (Boutique) Personal Librarian Program for Transfer Students and Other At-Risk Groups

Shannon Kealey
Santa Clara University, skealey@scu.edu

Helene Lafrance
Santa Clara University, hlafrance@scu.edu

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Developing a Personal Librarian Program for Transfer Students and Other At-Risk Groups

Helene Lafrance, Head of Research and Outreach
Shannon Kealey, Science Librarian
Santa Clara University Library
What is a Personal Librarian Program?

“A flexible concept that focuses on customizing information literacy by establishing a one-on-one relationship between librarian and student from enrollment through graduation”.

What’s different about our program?

● Target specific groups

● Boutique program - focus on the “personal” aspect
  ○ Personalized emails
  ○ Effort to meet with each student
  ○ Multiple emails each quarter
Selection of target groups

- **Transfer Students**
  - Often have difficult time adapting socially and academically to a new institution
  - More diverse group (age, education, social background) with greater need for support
  - Miss out on library instruction sessions offered to entering freshmen
  - Because they have declared a major, they can be assigned to a specific subject librarian
- **Students on Academic Probation**
  - Recommended by Academic Support Services
- **First Generation Students (Embedded librarian)**
Goals/Objectives of program

- Reach out to students who have traditionally fallen through the cracks in terms of library instruction and who might be at risk of dropping out of college
- Build personal relationships with transfer students and students on academic probation that would last through their academic career at Santa Clara
- Increase the students’ information literacy skills
- Help students use librarians as a resource
Implementation Overview

- Ran two pilot projects in winter and spring quarters 2015
  - 19 transfer students, winter 2015
  - 30 students on academic probation, spring 2015

- Implemented full program in fall 2015
  - 138 transfer students
  - 33 students on academic probation

- Recruited 11 librarians (approx. 20 students each)
Dear Kevin,

Welcome to Santa Clara University! I have been matched with you through SCU’s Personal Librarian Program for transfer students, and I look forward to working with you.

As your Personal Librarian, I will be your first point of contact for anything library- or research-related. I will check in with you periodically throughout the quarter to answer any questions you may have, help you when you don’t know where to start or what to do next, and answer your questions about SCU library policies, procedures, and services. My goal is to help make your academic life easier!

[Add something about yourself]

Are you available to meet me at the library for about 20 minutes at one of the following times/dates? Monday, January 12, anytime between 1 and 5 pm Wednesday, January 14, anytime between 3 and 5 pm

Please reply to this email or call me at 408-551-1740 to schedule our appointment and/or ask me any questions you may have. I look forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,

[Add your photo here if you want]

Your first point of contact for anything library-related

Your SCU Personal Librarian

even if you don't know what to ASK
# Implementation: Recording Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Student Email</th>
<th>Personal Librarian</th>
<th>Type of Students</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Faculty Advisor</th>
<th>Faculty Advisor Email</th>
<th>Faculty Advisor Department</th>
<th>Previous Invitation</th>
<th>Did Library Intro?</th>
<th>Did Library Help?</th>
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**Student Response:**

1. Blank: no response
2. Requested appointment or asked for help
3. Responded but did not need any help at the time

**Notes:**
- 9/25/2015: First contact
- 9/29/2015: Third contact
- 10/2/2015: Second contact
Quantitative Assessment -- 156 Transfer Students

Inactive
98 students
63%

Active
58 students
37%

One Interaction
38 students
66%

2+ Interactions
20 students
34%

“Active” is defined as one or more interactions with a Personal Librarian, even if the student didn’t need reference or research help.
Quantitative Assessment -- 63 Probation Students

Inactive
52 students
83%

Active
11 students
17%

One Interaction
8 students
73%

2+ Interactions
3 students
27%

“Active” is defined as one or more interactions with a Personal Librarian, even if the student didn’t need reference or research help.
Comparison with Other Programs

- Yale University: program for freshmen students. Only 10% contact their personal librarians (“A higher yield and the program would not work”).
- Univ. of Toronto: 970 graduate students, 4 emails sent by librarians, 243 emails in response per year (25%)
- Brock University: 3,045 undergraduate. Few students respond to emails, but the email open rate is 72 (and click-through rate was 5%). In a follow-up survey, 79% of the students said the messages were helpful.
- Alfred University, NY: 503 freshmen students. In a survey, 22% of the students said they had contacted their personal librarian.
How would you rate the helpfulness of the email templates provided to you for your email messages to the students in your case load?
“Contacted all students as assigned, after initial meetings, only a few asked for help.”

“I have not had too many responses from my assigned students. I would feel better about it if they would contact me more frequently.”
“I think it’s a great program and very worth the investment….Though the response rate was low from my people, I had very good meetings with those I did meet with.”

“For those students who responded and came in to meet with me, our meetings were rewarding.”
Qualitative Assessment - Student Surveys

- Two different surveys--one for active (69) and one for inactive (150) students
  - “Active” is defined as anyone who met with or emailed with their Personal Librarian, even if they didn’t need reference or research help
- None of the inactive students responded to the survey
- 15 out of 69 of the active students responded to the survey (22%)
Qualitative Assessment: Student Survey

If your interactions with your Personal Librarian included reference or research help, how would you rate the help you got from your Personal Librarian?

13 responses

Not at all useful: 0 (0%)
Not helpful: 0 (0%)
Somewhat helpful: 1 (7.7%)
Helpful: 4 (30.8%)
Very helpful: 8 (61.5%)
Extremely helpful: 0 (0%)
Your Personal Librarian has emailed you periodically with library tips (a recommendation of a database in your field of study, a spotlight on a service, etc.). Please choose the statement that best matches your perceptions of these emails.

(15 responses)

- 53.3%: I used at least one of the library tips.
- 33.3%: The tips were good to know, but I haven't used any of them.
- 13.3%: The tips themselves weren't useful, but I appreciated the reminder that I have a Personal Librarian.
- Other:
Qualitative Assessment - Student Survey

“[My Personal Librarian] is wonderful: she always emails me to check up whenever I am about to email her! She is very helpful and finds information/teaches me to find information that I am completely lost on.”

“I really like the personal librarian program. I am a transfer student and when I was assigned my first research paper at Santa Clara I really liked the fact I had a specific person to contact. Not only that but she showed me all the databases that Santa Clara has to offer and how to use them.”
Preliminary Stats from Winter & Spring 2016

Transfer students starting in winter 2016:
Total: 66
Active: 17 (21%)

Students on Academic Probation - Winter 2016
Total: 49
Active: 3 (6%)

International students in spring 2016
Total: 38
Active: 17 (45%)
Personal Librarian Pilot for International Students

- Approximately 1200 students out of 7500
- Mostly graduate students in Business and Engineering
- Majority start in the fall; smaller groups start in the winter and spring quarter
- We reached out to 38 students who started in spring 2016
- High response rate indicates a need of more services for international students
Challenges and Lessons learned

- Program may not work with all groups--rethinking academic probation
- We need to take into consideration librarians’ workload and keep them motivated
- We need to maintain excellent relationships with other campus units to obtain lists of students
- We need to improve the way we manage the program for it to be sustainable
- We need to drop non-responsive students after a while for the program to remain sustainable
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Batches of Emails</th>
<th>Minutes Total (excluding meetings)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FALL 2015 QUARTER</strong></td>
<td>3 x 31-60 min</td>
<td>186-360 min</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WINTER 2016 QUARTER</strong></td>
<td>2 x 31-60 min</td>
<td>217-420 min</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SPRING 2016 QUARTER</strong></td>
<td>2 x 31-60 min</td>
<td>279-540 min</td>
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What’s next?

- Assess the new pilot for international students, spring 2016 (current) quarter
- Complete assessment of the program at end of academic year and decide on changes/improvements
- Improve the way we record and manage data, and other program logistics
  - Create a master calendar with email schedule for all groups
  - Use mail merge and possibly a marketing email software such as Vertical Response or MailChimp
- Find new ways to motivate librarians participating in the program
Student Success Stories: Meet Maria Ilich
Student Success Stories: Meet Giannina Ong
How would this program work at your institution?
Questions?