

When have you experienced empathy in the last seven days? See if you can come up with an example you can share. 😊

**DON'T
GIVE UP**

**YOU ARE
NOT ALONE**

**YOU
MATTER**

Ps. Slide deck available at: bit.ly/2GvNdRC

Photo by [Dan Meyers](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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Serving Vulnerable Members of the Public at an Academic Library:

Implementing an Empathy-Driven Approach



News From the Robarts User Services Team

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Introduction

- Service environment at Robarts
- LIRA planning group
- Who are our external users?
- Why do we want them here?
- Service values at our library



Photo by Thomas Kuhna, [The Varsity](#)

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Ryan Dowd and Empathy-driven service

- Homeless shelter director
- Author: Librarian's Guide to Homelessness
- Empathy-driven service
 - Empathy vs. Punishment
 - Understanding differences
 - Body language



Photo by Jenny McNeece , [Sun-Com](#)

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Knowing what's going on

- Consultations
- Available data pools
- Environmental scan



Photo by Diana Pereira, [680 News](#)

Consultation with frontline staff at Robarts

Timeline: Early 2019

Purpose: Understanding staff experience;
generating ideas for service improvement

Consultation included:

- All permanent public service staff meeting (User Services)
- “I could live with that” Poll (Distributed to User Services staff and security staff)
- Interviews with public service supervisors
- Informal conversations



Case study: Staff consultation

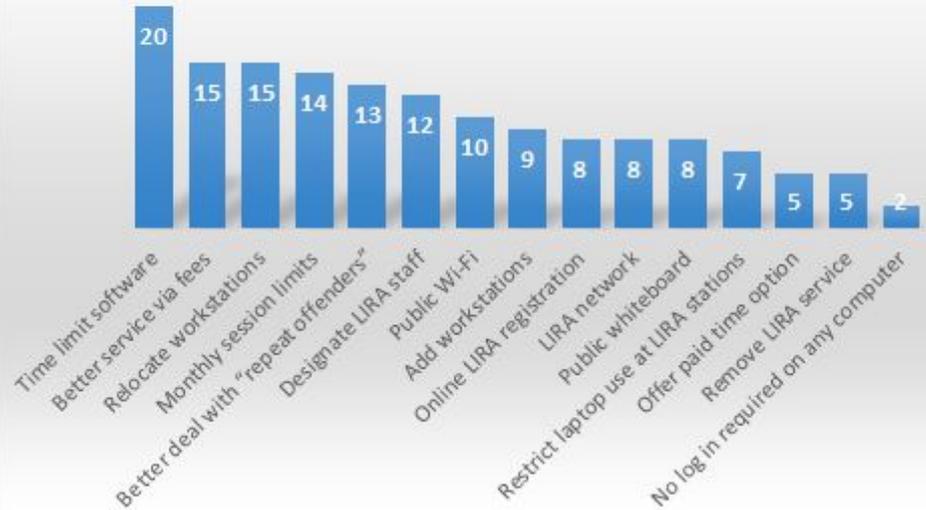
“I would not welcome a change that appeared to be overly-punitive toward LIRA patrons in general...”

(Security patrol)

“If [patrons] are struggling, the library should be a place where you can go to feel welcome.”

(Supervisor)

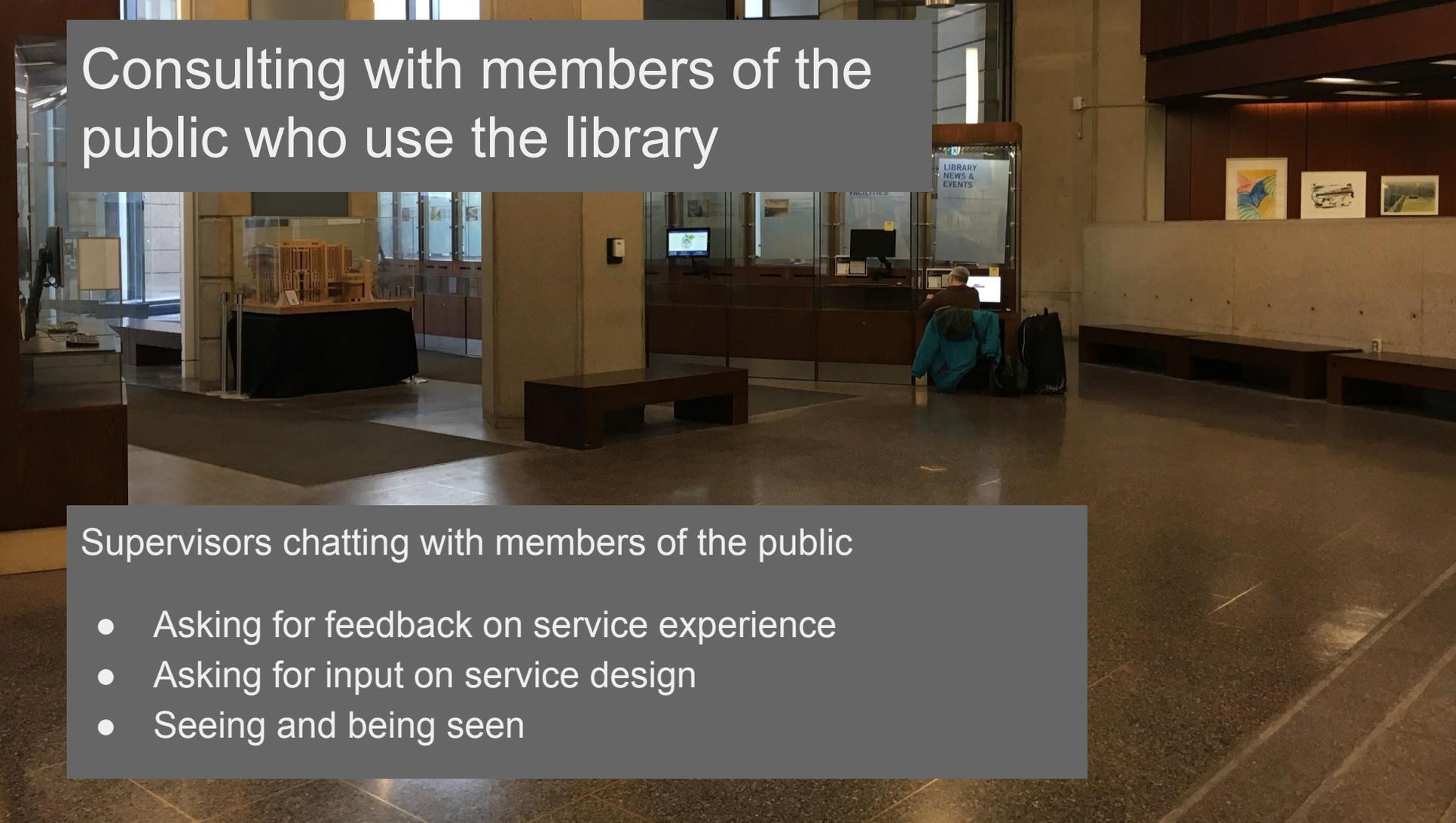
“I could live with that” Poll



Consulting with members of the public who use the library

Supervisors chatting with members of the public

- Asking for feedback on service experience
- Asking for input on service design
- Seeing and being seen



Consultation beyond Robarts

Timeline: Late 2018 - present

Purpose: Understanding PL experience;
generating ideas for service improvement

Consultation included outreach to:

- Public library colleagues
 - Department and service supervisors from Robarts and Toronto Reference Library
 - Social worker, services supervisors and student interns from TPL and UTL
- Academic library colleagues
 - Survey of public computer access across UofT
 - Service supervisors from Robarts and Simon Fraser



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Environmental Scan

Topic: Understanding LIRA services at Robarts Library

- Conducted by Allison Ridgway, Master of Information student intern

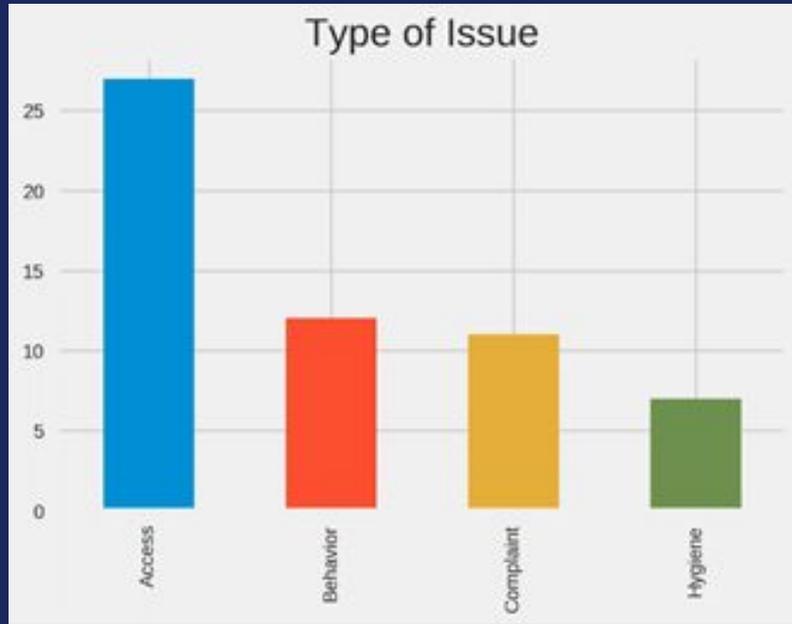
Scope: Examining computer services offered to external patrons at Robarts library

Purpose: Provide baseline context for future service design

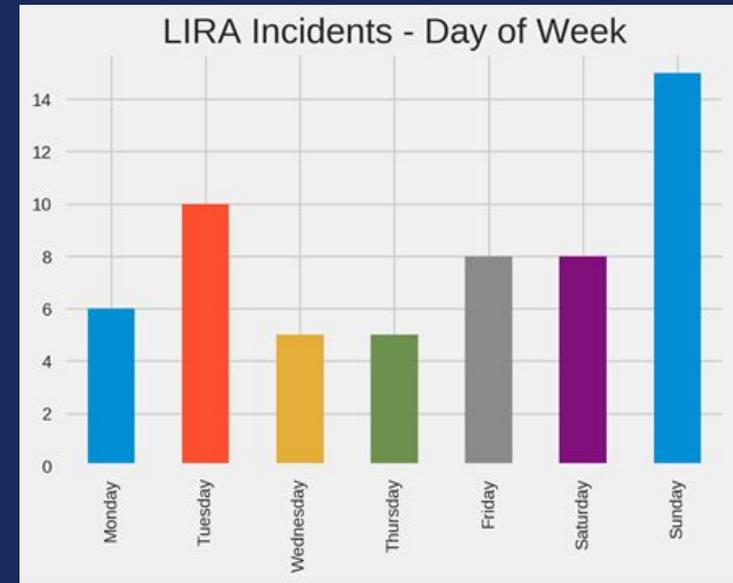
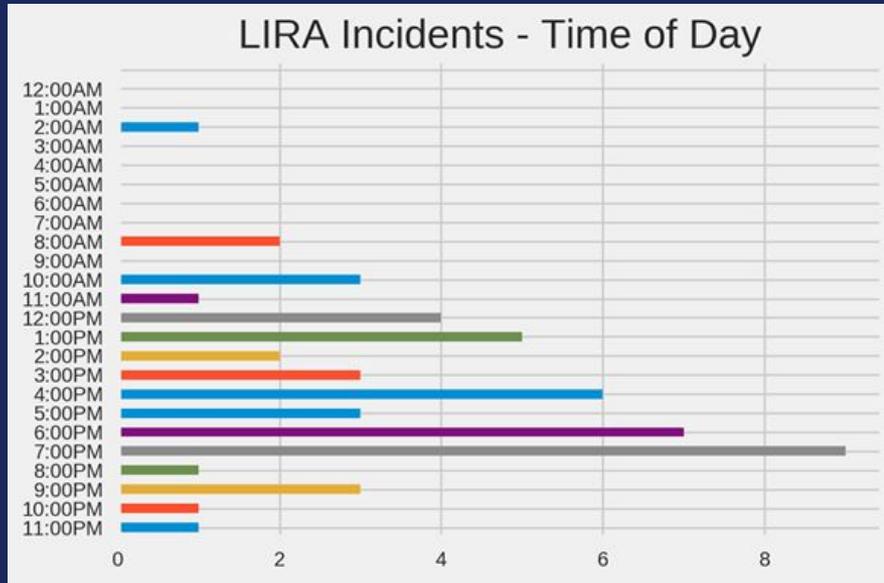
Methodology: Interview staff stakeholders; policy review; documented history; analysed patron relations and security data

Findings: Clear description of current service; synthesized policies; identified concerns and issues; identified information gaps needing to be addressed

Environmental Scan: What we learned



Case Study: Sample data pool



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New empathy-driven practices

Two streams:

- Outreach
- Security

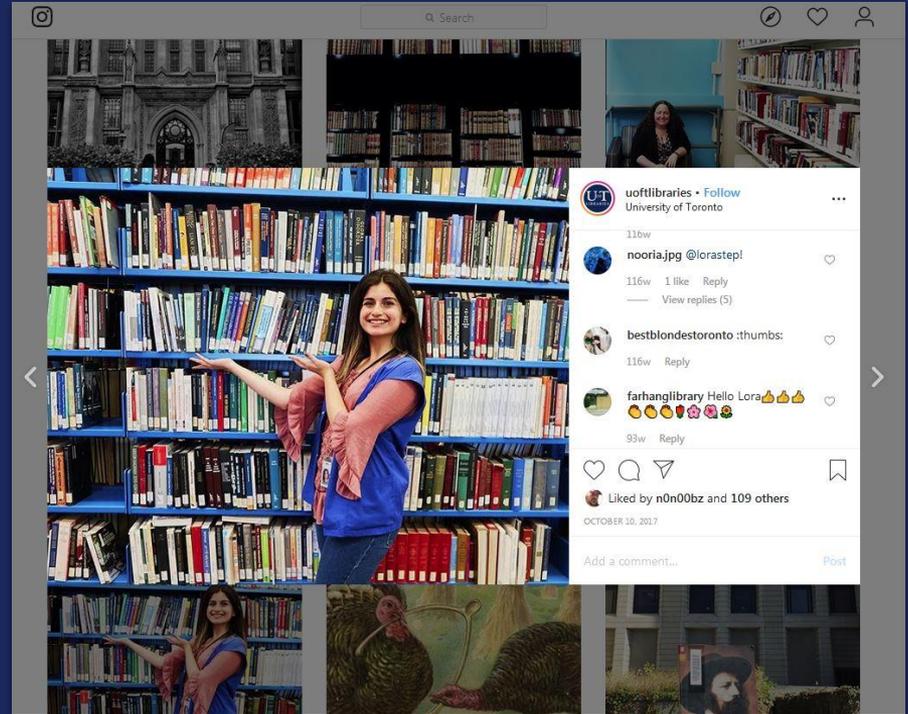


Photo by [Dan Meyers](#) on [Unsplash](#)

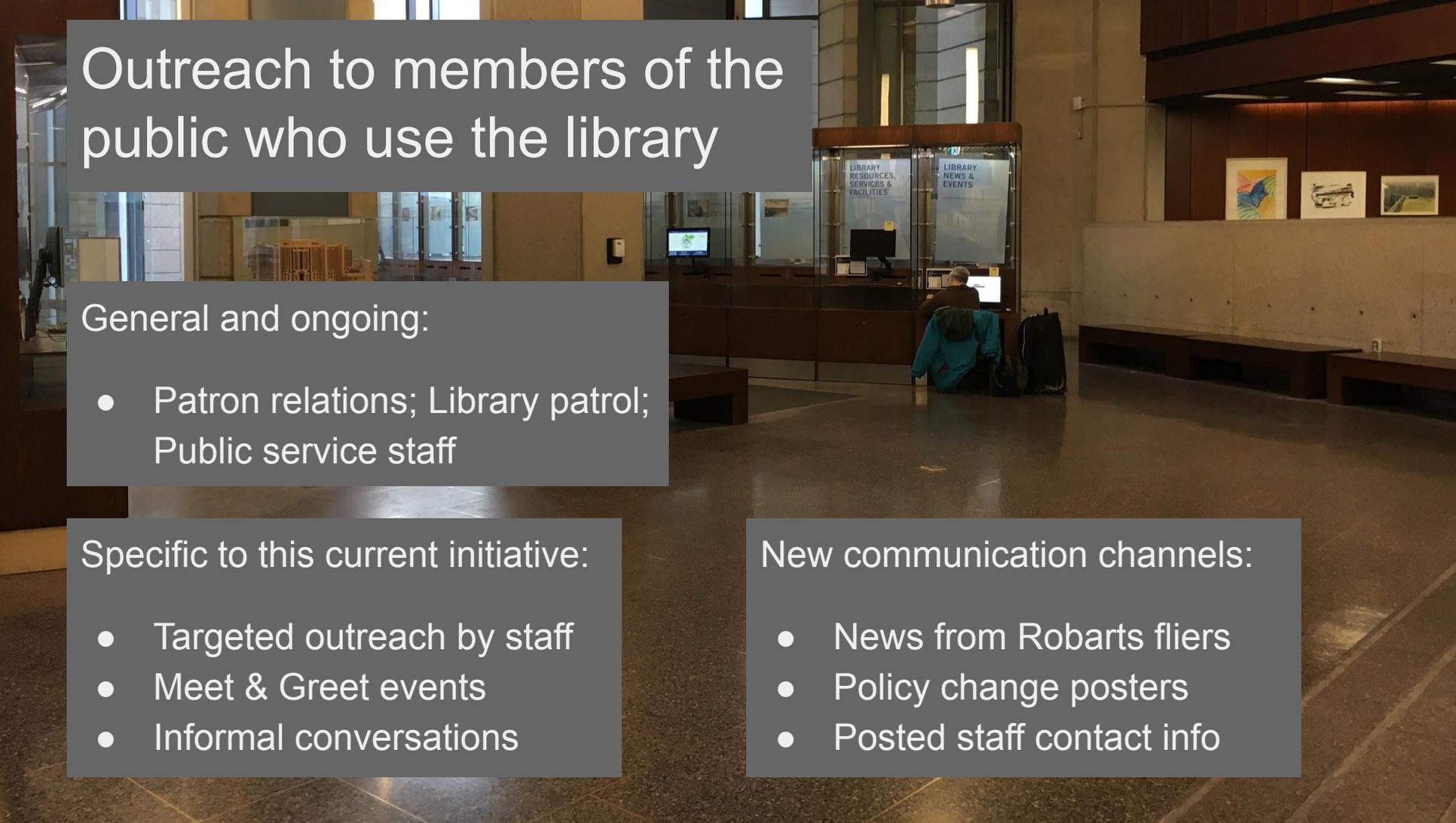
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New outreach practices

- Re-framing “external users” as valued segment of library community
- iStaff service outreach
- Supervisors outreach
- Communicating, managing, and getting feedback on change
- Community building events
- Cutting through red tape: Stack pass, building relationships



Outreach to members of the public who use the library

The background image shows a modern library interior. In the center, there is a service desk with a person sitting on a bench in front of it. The desk has signs that read "LIBRARY RESOURCES, SERVICES & FACILITIES" and "LIBRARY NEWS & EVENTS". There are several framed pictures on the wall to the right. The floor is polished and reflective.

General and ongoing:

- Patron relations; Library patrol; Public service staff

Specific to this current initiative:

- Targeted outreach by staff
- Meet & Greet events
- Informal conversations

New communication channels:

- News from Robarts fliers
- Policy change posters
- Posted staff contact info

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UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARIES

Press Ctrl+Alt+Delete to unlock.

1:10

Saturday, 25 January

RPW258

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News

From the Robarts User Services Team

Need Word?

While Microsoft Word is no longer available through your LIRA access, LibreOffice is available as an alternative.

Google Docs, Slides, Sheets are also available through the web browser.

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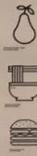


New Food Policy

As of January 6th Robarts is expanding the spaces where eating is permitted. Food can now be enjoyed anywhere on the 2nd floor, and in Reading Rooms and the escalator lobbies on floors 3-5. No food will be permitted on the 1st floor.

Where eating is allowed, please do your part to help us keep the library clean. Dispose of your waste, wipe down your table, and report any spills to staff.

Questions? Email: benjamin.walsh@utoronto.ca



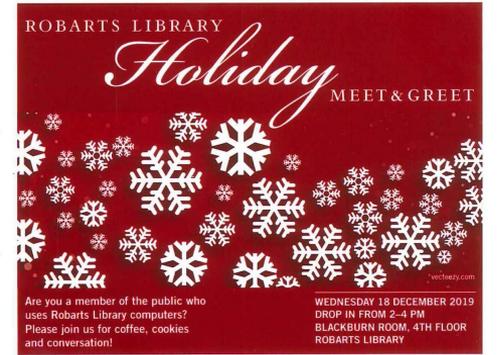
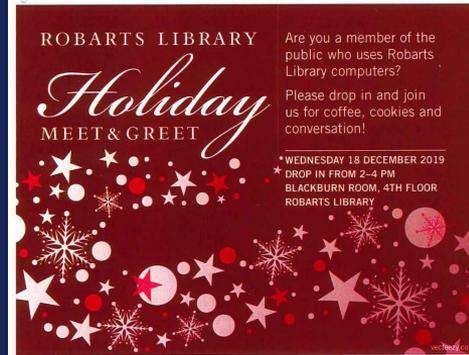
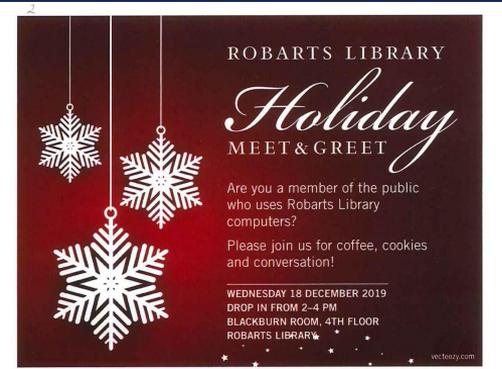
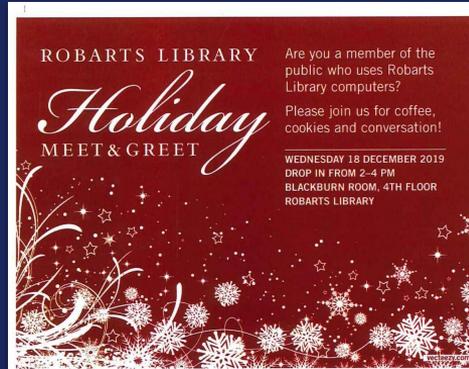
Case study: Community building event

Timeline: December 2019

Purpose: Understanding user experience; building community

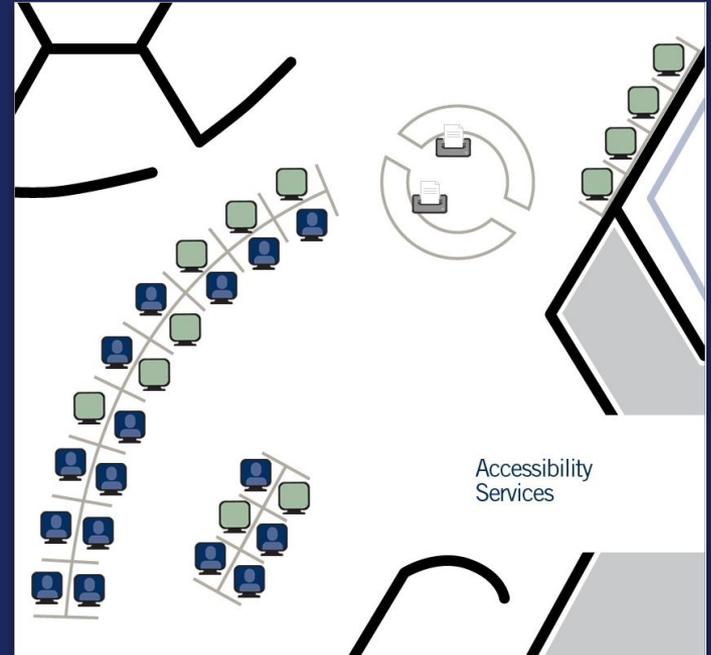
Event overview:

- TPL suggestion
- 5 staff members attended
- Open to all members of the public: 5 attendees
- 2-hour gathering
- Treats and coffee/tea



New security practices

- De-escalation by design



New security practices

- Security practices using empathy – learning first names; customized service
- LIRA service management via access to LIRA backend – fairer way of sharing limited resources



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Current and future assessment

Comparing last 12 months of data with previous 12 months

Updating Environmental Scan to reflect knowledge gained

Team reflections: Meet & Greet

Going forward: Comment box at LIRA workstations

Going forward: Regular community building events

Going forward: Leverage data generated through LIRA use

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Realities

This takes time. Ongoing and iterative consultation is important

What limits our staff from being empathy-driven?

Buy-in still needed from some corners

Recognition that some feel the public library is better suited

Building new communication skills takes time and practice

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Next Steps...



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Thank you!

Questions or Comments?

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Simple frameworks and models

Model for Staff Consultation

- Establish consultation team composed of various impacted employment groups
 - Communicate and advocate for goals
- Bring together key supervisors
 - Communicate and advocate for goals
- Draft consultation plan that:
 - Ensures varied opportunities and channels for staff participation
 - Permits anonymous participation and data privacy
 - Provides access to results
- Conduct consultation
- Assess results; Plan follow-up consultation

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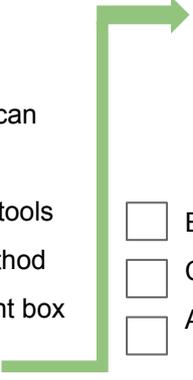
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Simple frameworks and models

Framework for Assessment

- Bring together key staff
 - Establish baseline
 - Eg. Environmental scan
 - Define assessment goals
 - Establish set of assessment tools
 - Patron feedback method
 - Eg. Comment box
- 
- Staff feedback method
 - Eg. "I can live with that" poll
 - User data analysis
 - Staff shift logs
 - Establish assessment frequency
 - Conduct assessment and analyze data
 - Annual review of baseline
 - Consider alternate data sources

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Simple frameworks and models

Model for Staff Training

- Plan initial training that is open to all staff
- Collaborate with supervisors to ensure staff have dedicated time to take part
- Reinforce training with subsequent PD opportunities
 - Eg. Lunch and learn; unit webinars
- Reinforce training through modelled best practices
- Provide opportunities for blended (online/in class) follow-up training

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Simple frameworks and models

Framework for Policy Enforcement

- Communicate pending changes early and frequently
- Introduce policies that take the needs of this patron group into account
 - Eg. Reconsidering ID requirements
- Modify existing policies to address the needs of this patron group
- Strive for transparency by ensuring policies available at LIRA stations
- Take time to provide reasons for policy decisions
- Be fair and consistent in enforcement of policies
- Be open to service redesign to reduce conflict