An RIS Rapid Response Investigation:

*The 24-hour Library: Staffing/Service Costs and Considerations*

Bonnie E. Avery for RIS

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**Abstract:**

This is a redacted version of a two-week investigation of academic libraries offering "24/7" services within the Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA). It was undertaken to better inform Oregon State University Libraries (OSUL) administration of the staffing, security and costs associated with providing such a service. OSUL undertook a pilot project to provide 24/5 service during the spring term of 2010.

**Research sponsor:**

Jennifer Nutefall, Associate University Librarian

Research conducted December 4-18, 2009

**Question:**

What is the current state of 24/7 building hours within GLWA and the ORBIS/Cascades Alliance?

* Are they open all or part of term? Only for students/faculty/staff?
* What are the staffing levels?
* Who provides security?
* What services are provided?
* What is the cost?
* Where does/did the funding come from

**Adjustments:**

* Investigated hours at all GWLA libraries,
* For Orbis/Cascades, only looked at UW, WSU, PSU, UO (the larger universities),
* Added information from NCSU because it is a common OSU comparator institution and also from Georgia Southern University. Both have had their 24 hour access for a long time.

**Methods:**

* **Literature review:** It is difficult to get a search strategy to cover 24 hour access that is not related to digital access. References found are listed in the “other” column of the attached spreadsheet. An exception to this is an article by Fred Smith at Georgia Southern University on their experience from 1989 through 2007. I was able to locate a few local articles on 24 hour library at the University of Hawai’i and Kansas State University in the course of googling for “hours” (no pun intended) to ascertain which GWLA libraries offered this service.
* **Web search:** Using a the GWLA website list of libraries I googled “[name of university] libraries” which usually brings up a link to “hours” – then by inspection I found those with 24 hour access and a clarification of building, and actual hours of operation, and information on whether university ID is required after a specific hour. For three institutions, this information was not readily available so I use their “chat reference” service to check.
* **Informal survey:** Because it is not easy to locate who to ask about this service and because this is a season when people are out, for those libraries with some form of 24 hour access I conducted an informal survey (see appendix I) using their “Email a reference question” link. I sent the same message tailored to that university asking them for information on security, staffing levels, services and funding with a caveat that I would be happy to contact them by phone if provided a contact. I made it clear that this was NOT for publication (and for that reason I have not used library names in this report except where the information was on their website or in a publication. These messages went out on Monday, December 14 at 3pm and by 6pm on December 15, I had heard from all but 2 libraries (Libraries J and K). I did not contact UO as it was my understanding that Jennifer had already done so and I didn’t want them to get questions from two directions. I was given contacts for three institutions and sent them a follow up email and in each case received a reply within 24 hours as well.

**Results:**

* No library offers 24/7 access.
* 24/5 access is offered by 15 of the 30 libraries surveyed. Hours begin at opening on Sunday (varies from 7:30am to 1pm) and end at closing on Friday (varies from 5pm to Midnight).
* Most do not offer this during the summer term and UO offers it beginning the third week of classes.
* Aside from the Library E which was going to offer two overnight facilities and has had to cut back to one for budgetary reasons, none of the libraries surveyed are planning to cut this service though the budgetary constraints are there.
* Libraries designate a specific hour for when “overnight” services begin. After that time, University ID is required by all but one library where “the library is open to the public whenever the building is open.”
  + In most cases this is a clear policy though on their website
  + ID is checked at the door after a specified hour.
  + ID are checked for those in the library at this hour and non-ID holders must leave (this happens ~11pm in most cases).
* **Security**:
  + Student safety is reported as a big concern but at the same time security problems are not emphasized (there is some reporting of loss of library property, petty theft, trespassers, etc.).
  + Some libraries have elected not to offer study room check-out during overnight hours for security reasons. Fred Smith offered a list of “quasi-security” issues worth considering (Smith, 2007).
  + All libraries report having a good relationship and rapid response to calls to Campus Police/Security and where library staff members provide security, this is always cited. In addition, several mention campus police doing a walk-through or clearing the building of non-university patrons when night hours begin and checking in with library staff on their rounds. In one case, campus security also provides students with a safe ride to their dorms.
  + Where security services are contracted it is usually from an existing campus department.
  + The trend is to provide security from library staff on duty.
  + Cases where only security staff members are present are also where the building is only serving as a study and computer facility (Library C and Library I) – generally where only one floor of the building is available.
  + Other security measures mentioned include: gated service desks, security cameras; renovations to library so parts of building can be closed, insisting that staff wear either a vest or badge clearly indicating that they are staff, walkie-talkies of staff (particularly if there are only two) and never having fewer than two staff members present.
  + Two major jobs of “security” regardless of who is providing it are to “walk the library” on at least an hourly basis and to check identification and in both cases take counts of users.
* **Staffing:** 
  + Staffing levels vary widely (2-8 FTE including security, classified, students).
  + No library staffs with fewer than 2 people at a time and more if possible to cover inevitable illness, leave.
  + Important to build in some staff redundancy for coverage.
  + **Where staffing levels are higher, there are more services AND there is more of a philosophical take on “the library never closes” so this is seen as a time when a lot of behind the scenes work can be done (ILL orders, scanning for document delivery, shelving, shifting, maintenance and setting up for the morning, etc.)**
  + Management of overnight staff is an important issue and there are frequently stricter policies in place for these workers concerning when they can take breaks and leave time.
  + Cross-training among night staff is critical.
  + Turn-over is higher and a lot of time is spent hiring.
  + There is a voiced reluctance by many to staff with students because it conflicts with their studies (in some cases there is an edict from campus administrators about students working after midnight).
  + It is noted that while the overnight classified positions are popular with students they often don’t bring a well formed accountability ethic with them and are unhappy to be told that the hours are less flexible because there are fewer options for coverage of an absence.
  + Need for additional custodial servicing is noted as an important consideration.
  + Library G notes that they will add a “professional shusher” to the PD of one of their new hire as there is a problem of noise (voiced by students).
* **Services offered:**
  + All libraries offer study space.
  + Access to food and drink area (a coffee shop or vending machine area)
  + All offer computer access (though the extent of this varies).
  + Where the stacks are open, circulation is provided whether via self-check or a staff member or both.
  + Access to Reserves whether via e-reserves or staff member is important.
  + Self-service printing/photocopy services and trouble-shooting are important.
  + Few libraries offer reference/information services. Some note that patrons expect some help if there is an identifiable staff member available so some staff familiarity with the “virtual library” is important as is help locating material if stacks are open. Via their undergraduate library Library H offers a version of reference at a combined circ/ref desk and Library A offers “full-service” 24/5.
* **Cost and funding:** I was not able to get budgets from all libraries and the reality is that the relevance of these figures will vary depending on staffing levels and prevailing wage. That information could probably be tracked down with phone calls if needed (I have contacts now and all offered to provide more information if needed).
  + Library A = 6 staff, was told that would be funded for full service library operation originally by provost but doesn’t think they received it all and notes this is particularly true for student workers. They hire for mid-range classified staff to get people with some experience.
  + Library B = 2 late night security monitors ($10-12/hour with full benefits) and one member of student technology services staff (think that is not part of library) and 2-4 student workers. Study hall and computer access only.
  + Library C = received addition base budget funding for additional security originally now this is funded out of regular library budget: $110,775 for guards and $4,500 for extra custodial help annually). Blog article from the University librarian in 2006 noted cost was $200,000.
  + Library D = 3.7 FTE staff $144,000; Grad. Students and Tech Assistants $20,000; Security $37,000.
  + Library E = Almost entirely covered by supplemental funds from the Chancellor’s office includes: 3 security guards (contracted by same company used during the day) $15/hour; full-time late night support staff person. ($80,000 for security)
  + Library F = $200,000 in 2009 and $150,000 in 2010. Special allocation form president’s office based on Student surveys in 2008. Funds 2 classified staff and up to 4 student employees and private security guards

**References**

Kearns, Sara K. (2006) "24/5 = $200,000" Talking in the Library (blog). October 17, 2006. <http://ksulib.typepad.com/talking/2006/10/245200000.html>

Kendra (2009) "Hamilton Library Launches 24-hour schedule" Kaleo, The Voice: December 18, 2009 <http://www.kaleo.org/2.13219/hamilton-library-launches-24-hour-schedule-1.1794174>

Smith, Fred (2007) "24 hour service at Georgia Southern University: 1989-2007" Journal of Access Services 5(1/2): 69-83. (Volume 5(1-3).

Also listed as monograph:

Best practices in access services / Lori Driscoll and W. Bede Mitchell editors, (New York: Hawworth, 2008) and

Smith, FW and Tony Ard (2002) "Twenty four service at the Georgia Southern University Library." Journal of Access Services: 1(2):25-35.

Tinsley, Adrian Y. (2008) "End users speak out: the users expectations!" Against the grain 20(3): 74-75.

Appendix I

[Survey responses](http://wiki.library.oregonstate.edu/confluence/download/attachments/3670089/24-5+email+replies-bea-12-22-09.xlsx) and contact information linked on RIS wiki at <http://wiki.library.oregonstate.edu/confluence/download/attachments/3670089/24-5+email+replies-bea-12-22-09.xlsx> -- for internal use.

Appendix II: Survey email sample(s)

Via email form:

Question History:

Patron: I am interested in information about your 24 hour use of Odegaard as we are considering this at Oregon State University Libraries and have a few questions about related to staffing.

--Who provides security,

--Do you use student workers, and/or other staff --what services are offered during extended hours.

--If you can provide a rough estimate of the cost per year that would be helpful but the staffing levels and services are of most concern.

If this can be answered by email, wonderful. If a phone call is better, contact information would be great. This is for internal use only not for publication.

Many thanks and Best regards,

Bonnie Avery

Natural Resources Librarian

OSU Libraries

Follow up to contact:

Hello Nancy,

I was referred to you as a good source of information about the extended hours at the University of New Mexico Libraries.  We are considering this at Oregon State University Libraries and have a few questions about related to staffing.  So my questions are these:

* Who provides security,
* Do you use student workers, and/or other staff
* What services are offered during extended hours
* If you can provide a rough estimate of the cost per year (and/or where the funding is coming from) that would be helpful but the staffing levels and services are of most concern.

If these can be answered by email, wonderful. If a phone call is better I would be happy to do that.  This is for internal use only not for publication.

I realize that you may have received a copy of this message forwarded to you from Charotte Walther and hope this doesn’t clutter your email.

My best regards and congratulations on providing a service which I am sure is appreciated.

Bonnie

*Bonnie Avery   
Natural Resources Librarian   
Research and Innovative Services (RIS)   
Oregon State University Libraries   
121 The Valley Library    
Corvallis, OR 97331-4501*[*TEL:541-737-7602/Fax*](TEL:541-737-7602/Fax)*: 541-737-8224   
EMAIL:* [*bonnie.avery@oregonstate.edu*](mailto:bonnie.avery@oregonstate.edu) *OSU Libraries: information, service, innovate*