Establishing Roaming Service to promote an integrated Reference from the National Medical Library at UAEU

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Establishing a Roaming Service to promote an integrated reference from the National Medical Library at UAEU

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Introduction
The Roaming Reference concept is relatively new at the National Medical Library (NML) at UAE University. The purpose is to meet the patrons at the point-of-need while increasing the visibility of the library. This type of services enables the library to become an integral part of the broader institutional culture, through promoting the library resources and reference services. The librarians use iPads to engage in technology-supported roaming reference to offer face to face reference service at the patron’s point-of-need.

Objectives:
• Develop and increase our communication with patrons who do not normally approach the desk.
• Promote library service and provide access to information services and research support to all patrons at all locations in the library.
• To assess the students’ perception of the roaming service at the point of service and identify benefits and eventual challenges for this new form of services.
• To collect and review the patron’s feedback in order to develop the roaming reference service.

Implementation:
The first phase of the roaming reference at the UAE Medical Library was conducted in term 3 of the academic year from August to December 2020. The service consists of librarians who are considered experts in using various information tools. A typical roamer is usually conducted between 5 AM to 8 PM, six hours per day in two shifts, where two roams for each shift, with a duration of 5 minutes for each room by the Librarian.

The librarians of the NML are generally supportive of this service through the announcement of medical resources available at the NML.

Technology:
I-Pads were assigned to librarians to be used during the roaming service to provide quick answers and to teach students how to download medical apps such as point-of-care tools and diagnostic tools. In addition, the roaming librarians also use iPads to demonstrate how to access medical databases such as Access Medicine database and anatomy resources.

Marketing:
The roaming reference service will be announced to the CMHS community by e-mails and launched at NML website. The roaming librarians will be available at the point-of-need where they can answer patrons’ questions, promote the service and engage with patrons. To market the service and make the librarians visible, stickers has been created and placed at the back of the iPads that students easy can identify the roaming librarians.

Data collection:
The librarians conduct a survey about the Library Mobile Roaming Reference Services. The questions were related to their past use of reference services, in order to document the change and obtain feedback of this service. The librarians were advised to carry with them printed survey forms ready to be given to patrons after the roaming interaction. Questions included on the survey are connected to the 5 patrons’ perception of the roaming and whether or not the use of this service increased their interest in contacting librarians for research help.

Sample interaction questions:
• Do you think that Librarians moving around with iPads will make research services more accessible to you?
• Will you approach the librarians with reference questions during the roaming service more than at the reference desk?
• Do you think that the librarians moving around will contribute and increase the awareness with the medical resources in the library?

Conclusion:
The Roaming Reference Service is a new library service added to the National Medical Library at UAEU. The student-embellished and integrated reference support meets a different set of needs from the library patrons. It is aimed to enable students to complete the possibility to reference transactions with ongoing support and information when it is needed. Promote the services and resources of the library as well as outreach activities and the efficient usage of resources.

Regarding the answers to the questions about the duration and the service satisfaction (54%) of patrons are satisfied with the information provided by librarians, (54) of patrons are extremely very satisfied with the duration of the help provided by roaming service, and (54) are satisfied.

Future plans:
The librarians hope that this project will continue to help serve more patrons by using iPads with the reference service beyond the reference desk. The service raises awareness of the service offered by the library, further marketing efforts are needed to increase the visibility of the service. Today the librarians and library services are not connected to fixed point a desk, with roaming service, we have the potential to reach out beyond the library facility and meet the faculty members and outside users. This service was done within the library facility as library is not limited to a reference desk.

References:
- Shum, Alison and Walsh, Andrew (2019) Roving librarians at a mid-sized, UK based University. Library Technology Reports, 14(4), pp. 1-7, 8. ISSN 0896-7300.