How to Use Existing Residential Networks to Promote the Value of the Library

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Benjamin Andrus & Anne Larrivee

Residential Life at Binghamton University

Binghamton University has:
• over 14,500 students
• 6 dorm communities with 1,200-1,500 students per community

Since there is not an option for BU students to enroll in a mandatory library information literacy course, many students lack basic library-related knowledge.

Information Overload

Utilizing RAs’ Existing Social Networks to Plan Library-related Programs

The Library to Dorm Outreach Program was imitated in February 2011 to provide information literacy and promote library services to undergraduate students in the comfort of their own housing community.

Why work with RAs

RAs’ familiarity with their residents provide them with the insight to know what promotional methods and outreach strategies will work best within their residence halls. They are often urged to plan a certain number of events. The Library to Dorm Outreach program averages an attendance of 8-15 students.

Program Setup

• Librarians promote the program during Fall and Spring RA Training; the promo is usually 5 minutes and includes some type of memorable, comedic approach
• RAs will email us with a date and time, evenings tend to be preferred.
• Librarians offer to bring a projector and laptop, and meet RAs in dorm
• RAs are responsible for all the pre-planning of the program

Program Content

• First Half: Overview of library services, and helpful research strategies
• Second Half: Demo of e-resources: databases, Refworks, and explanation of subject headings, Boolean searching, and pros and cons of Google

Effective Elements of Library to Dorm Outreach

- Collaborative partnership with RAs
- Comfortable, familiar environment
- Quick paced, and no more than 30-45 minutes
- Desired incentives: food, games, social time, research tips

Examining Social Networks

Sociogram Example of a Student Social Network (ICT discussion interaction)

“A social network consists of a finite set or sets of actors and the relation or relations defined on them” (Wasserman, 1994, p.20)

- Social networks are linked to social capital because of the influence individuals can hold within their own network (Lin, 1999)
- A chronology of social networks, taken from the Encyclopedia of Social Networks, shows how networks have been used in religion, politics, conflicts, fandom, business, etc (Barnett, 2011)

Similar Programs