Reducing the noise

Improving Library staff communication, knowledge-sharing & engagement with common platforms

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Fig. 1. Comic of mail then vs now. This is what I think of mail, by poofytoo.tumblr.com (2011, July 24). Retrieved from http://poofytoo.com/post/7991895471/this-is-what-i-think-of-mail
If we can't solve it via email, IM, texting, faxing, or phone calls, let's resort to meeting in person.
Hello!

I am Heather Westerlund
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I love libraries, technology, and improving the user experience and access to resources.
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Focus on **social change**

- PhD, Masters, & Undergrad in traditional and CBL environments
- 52,000+ enrolled students from 155 countries
- Working adults over the age of 30
Walden Library (awesome)
- 100% virtual
- ~25 (mostly) remote librarians
- 4 time zones, 7 days a week
Innovators!
Which is cool because...

**pros (yay!)**
- Highly regarded at our institution
- Better equipped to take on change & handle issues
- Drivers of technological change

**...except for the risks**
- Too many platforms
- Too many ways to communicate
- Staff fatigue & frustration
- Impact on consistency & quality of services
The situation

- Too many channels
- Information overload
- No communication plan
Specifically...

- Too much email
- Lack of tools that facilitate collaboration
- Out-of-date internal documentation, hosted & unorganized in multiple systems
- Chat app not universally adopted or integrated
- Staff training inefficient and time-consuming
- Unpredictability of where/how to expect communication
- No budget for this issue
Today

Just as many channels for communication & knowledge-sharing
But...

- Reduced # of platforms
- Embraced platforms that give staff more control over notifications
- Defined how channels are used
6 problems
6+ solutions
Problem 1
Practicing a culture of open communication
Solution

Practice what we preach.
Leaders that staff trust.
Clear communication strategy.
Transparency.
IT that supports this.
Problem 2

Too many disconnected systems
Solution

Condense down to 2 primary application suites:

LibApps & O365
(previously Google Apps)
Problem 3

Overabundance of ineffective channels & information overload
Solution

Yammer groups facilitate info & knowledge-sharing & discussion in key areas of the Library.

Adapting to staff preference & workflow.
Problem

Staff meetings via phone awkward & not inclusive
- Less participation
- Lack of visual cues

Meetings with existing conferencing software cumbersome

Fig. 4. Communication meme. Can you hear me?, by memegenerator.net.
Retrieved from http://memegenerator.net/instance/66636031
Solution

Google Hangouts / Skype for Business:
- Video meetings help librarians feel more connected
- Chat makes quick questions easier
- Ref desk chatter
- Preservation of meetings & chats

Ways to improve communication:
1. More chocolate
2. Puppies!
3. Smiling
4. Play pictionary on a whiteboard!
Problem 4
Decentralized, disorganized internal documentation
Solution

LibGuides Intranet

- Organized by functional area which is owned & maintained by a manager
- Main/sub nav pages are pathfinders (list of links) for scalability
Other features

- Restricted
- Custom header
- Searchable
- Site index
- Feedback tab
- Custom homepages
Solution

OneDrive & Groups
- Sharing & collaboration on projects
- Secure sharing among a defined group of people
- Docs linked in Intranet when appropriate
Problem 5

Staff training inefficient & time-consuming
Solution

Asynchronous training with videos & tutorials
- No fancy software needed (Windows Movie Maker)
- Hosted in O365
- Videos, embedded in LibGuides Intranet
Problem 6
Soliciting & encouraging staff feedback not effective or inclusive
Solution

Yammer: instant feedback and quick responses

◉ Anyone can weigh in via replies, polls, surveys
◉ Better for staff inclusion and engagement
◉ Still offer private & anonymous methods to provide feedback
Vastly different communication preferences

[ face-to-face video meetings vs real-time discussion boards ]
Tech Summary

- **Yammer groups**
  [work & social, monthly manager announcements]

- **Skype**
  [meetings, staff chat, coffee talks, all-staff meetings, social events]

- **OneDrive & Groups**
  [doc storage, drafts, planning, & collaboration]
Tech Summary

- LibGuides Intranet
- LibAnswers
  [embedded FAQ]
- LibWizard
  [embedded feedback forms]
- LibCal
  [embedded webinar & dept planning calendars]
- LibStaffer
  [Ref sched pushed to Outlook]

O365
LibApps
Tech Summary

O365
LibApps
Cross-platform

Embed, Embed, Embed.
Some librarians feel less connected with asynchronous training & discussion

Difficulty locating some documentation

Some info still gets lost in discussion feeds

Lessons learned

More video meetings; social events

Staff feedback; continual improvements

Help staff set up notifications properly
Lessons learned

- Video meetings = more technical issues
- Challenges with librarians feeling comfortable sharing concerns

Experience w/ platform; hardware improvements
Anonymous feedback; 1-on-1 meetings w/ video (not recorded)
Future

- Single sign-on with LibApps
- Internal FAQ with LibAnswers
- Task automation (e.g. O365 Flow, IFTTT)

Continually looking for ways to improve internal communication, knowledge-sharing, & engagement.
If you build it to be easy, they will come.

"Field of Dreams, 1989 (….sort of)"
Thanks!

Any questions?

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References

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