Title: Pandemic-era Administrative Decision-making Informed by Patron and Employee Feedback

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# Abstract

This article follows up on two previously published studies regarding the incorporation of student feedback amid the COVID-19 pandemic. It builds on the model of embracing user experience, focusing on how library employees and patrons felt about the health safety protocols in place during Fall 2021. Analyzing both surveys from employees and patrons, the findings indicated that both groups felt safe in the library. This article recommends that when library decision-makers are in doubt about policies and practices, they should consult with the groups directly affected, and demonstrates the importance of ensuring stakeholders feel heard and can contribute to decision-making.

## Keywords: COVID-19, assessment, health and safety, patron feedback, student voice, library employees

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# Introduction

This article follows up on two previously published studies regarding the incorporation of student feedback amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Scoulas, Carrillo & Naru, 2021a; Scoulas, Carrillo & Naru, 2021b). It builds on the model of embracing user experience, focusing on how library employees perceived serving as Wellness Ambassadors, and how patrons experienced the library with the health safety protocols in place during Fall 2021. It reports the findings of a Wellness Ambassador End of Shift Survey and Patron Survey that were conducted during Fall 2021 and how the University Library continues to monitor and respond to feedback from library staff and patrons, the direction of which are not always in agreement.

Prior to the pandemic, the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) Richard. J. Daley Library was a highly-trafficked, popular, publicly accessible space, that allowed food delivery and large group study gatherings. The building was open 24 hours for five days of the week, offered group study rooms, private study carrels, lockers, food and coffee service, and a microwave. Contract security was scheduled for evening hours for the protection of late-studying students, and furniture arrangements were flexible in terms of being able to be reconfigured throughout the building.

COVID-19 ended this lively and largely unregulated environment. In response to the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19 and in light of recent civil unrest, the University Library made a radical shift in policies and protocols in its physical spaces. Changes were based on the University’s health safety guidelines, and included limiting entry to campus-affiliates, requiring a daily health check (via an online system), prohibiting food and disposable drinks, reducing services such as individual carrels and locker spaces which could not be adequately monitored, and implementing an online reservation system for booking socially distanced single-study seating.

Conforming to the university standards and also in response to students’ opinions solicited through focus groups, the library provided free and accessible personal protective equipment (PPE) such as sanitizers and masks and trained dedicated Library staff compliance monitors to maintain health and safety in the library (Scoulas *et al*., 2021a). All changes and evolving policies were actively communicated via social media and signage. The library was in new territory and uncertain about how these sudden and restrictive changes would impact staff and patrons. We needed to measure if the guidelines were too stringent, not stringent enough, or appropriately stringent. Findings from a Fall 2020 patron survey revealed that visitors had an overall favorable response to the changes and perceived the library as one of the safe places they could go to study on campus; positive responses prevailed despite the library not being able to meet patron requests for extended hours and access to group study spaces (Scoulas *et al*., 2021b).

A University Library’s Monitoring Compliance Working Group was created in Summer 2020 to ensure equitable health safety policies and to train staff for the consistent enforcement of those policies. When asked about who should monitor compliance in the Library, focus group students expressed a strong preference for badged Library staff over uniformed contract security (Scoulas *et al*., 2021a). The Access Service Department, which would typically have the responsibility to oversee library spaces during hours of operation, did not have sufficient staff to cover service desks as well as rove the four floors of the building. To address the coverage deficit, the University Library created a Wellness Ambassador Program, asking for volunteers from all departments to help foster a welcoming presence while also monitoring for health and safety compliance. Volunteers were accepted in addition to the contracted security and both were provided the same training. Contract security was also requested to “dress-down” so as not to present a law-enforcement-style presence. The University Library first launched the Wellness Ambassador Program in Fall 2020, and volunteers from library reference, administration, and other departments filled regular shifts to monitor health safety compliance in the four-floor building. Because employees were allowed to work from home and some were hesitant to return to the workplace, there were fewer staff available to fulfill the Ambassador duties.

The Monitoring Compliance Working Group provided training for the Wellness Ambassadors to maintain consistent standards for library protocols, create straightforward expectations for library use, and minimize escalation with non-compliant patrons using empathy and universal applicability of rules. Among the goals of the University Library's Wellness Ambassador program was to create an inclusive environment in which all students feel safe and welcome, a part of the university's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) centered strategic plan.

The Wellness Ambassador program provided insight for the library regarding staff experiences of working the floors during the pandemic, as well as patron behavior in response to the ongoing changes to Library protocols. After implementing the Wellness Ambassador Program, the University Library conducted two follow-up ongoing assessments: a weekly “Wellness Ambassador End of Shift Survey” that allowed Wellness Ambassadors to report any incidents and how they perceived the effectiveness of the program, and a monthly patron survey that assessed how patrons perceived their experiences in the library and examined whether their needs were met by the health safety changes.

In the new academic year beginning Fall 2021, in-person classes returned to campus resulting in an increase in Library traffic. Due to a new vaccine mandate, social distancing was also removed as a university policy, though masking remained a requirement. These university-level changes resulted in the Library discontinuing the single-seating booking system. Masking, daily health checks, affiliate-only entry, and the food/drink policy remained in place, however, so the Wellness Ambassador Program remained in effect.

The Library climate is still undergoing change and there is an ongoing need to confront the challenges of balancing patron requests with the reality of uncertainty about maintaining safety protocols. This article discusses implemented strategies and the evolution of using adaptive assessment that may benefit other staff, leaders, administrators, and user experience librarians evaluating welcoming practices and safety protocols within the library.

# Literature Review

As the COVID-19 pandemic has an effect across the world, libraries swiftly adapted to this extreme environment when planning to reopen. The goal of reopening the libraries is to ensure that patrons safely use and access the library resources and services with equal emphasis on the safety of library staff who work on the frontlines interacting with patrons and handling physical library resources. So then, what measures do libraries have to use to protect against COVID-19? Samanta (2020) summarized eight guidelines of protocols outlined by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) to avoid getting infected in the libraries: 1) hand sanitizing and washing should be maintained prior to entering the library; 2) circulation and lending sections (books borrowed and returned) should have extra precautions; 3) systems should be applied to sanitize library cards and books returned; 4 and 5) reading rooms and computer rooms and computer accessories should be cleaned and sanitized after library hours; 6) library staff and patrons should be aware of whether they are ill from COVID-19; 7) maintaining social distancing and 8) limiting the number of patrons in the library. Samanta also explained that these guidelines described above should be also applied post-pandemic.

REopening Archives Libraries, and Museums (REALM), a partnership formed by OCLC, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Battelle conducted “research that includes laboratory testing on materials contaminated with SARS-CoV-2; tracking the scientific literature on issues of transmission, decontamination, vaccines and variants” (OCLC, n.d.). Studies done on how long the virus can survive on surfaces informed the degree to which extra precautions in terms of handling and remediation should be taken and whether circulating materials needed to be quarantined. They also collected examples to “help libraries, archives, and museums mitigate COVID-19 exposure to staff and visitors.” Subsequent research recognized the evolving nature of the virus, and REALM modified its recommendations based on scientific studies (OCLC, n.d.).

The Association of College & Research Libraries’ (ACRL) Value of Academic Libraries (VAL) committee created a COVID-19 subcommittee to explore how academic libraries in the United States and Canada adjusted library operations (services, spaces, resources, and interaction with personnel) during the pandemic. To examine this issue, the ACRL VAL COVID-19 subcommittee conducted an online survey during Spring 2021, and a total of 150 academic libraries participated in the survey (Zaugg *et al*., 2021). With respect to what COVID-19 protocols were established, more than 90% of libraries required library employees and students to follow the “physical distancing” and “stay at home if sick” guidelines. Other common COVID-19 protocols required by libraries for library employees and students included “frequent hand washing,” “regulated traffic flow,” “required [health] screening protocols,” “group meetings limited in time and/or size,” and “wear eye/face shields/masks or goggles in public areas.” However, there are slightly different COVID-19 protocols required for library employees and students. For example, 84% of libraries allowed library employees to have “no masks in private areas,” whereas only 24% of libraries allowed students to not wear masks in private areas. Twenty-two percent of libraries required library employees to take “COVID-19 tests,” whereas 32% of libraries required students follow that protocol. However, most of the libraries did not require COVID-19 protocols described above of non-university patrons. Regarding a question on how COVID-19 protocols were enforced, the use of library employees to enforce compliance was the most frequent practice (40%), with 18% of libraries reporting that expulsion for non-compliance was implemented. Some libraries had campus police (17%) or library security guards (8%) to monitor compliance. Only 3% of the libraries did not use any compliance enforcement methods.

While the findings above demonstrate how academic libraries adjusted services, spaces and personnel, little is known about what concerns students have, whether their voices were considered in decision-making for academic library operations, and what they actually experience in the libraries during the pandemic. One study by Scoulas *et al*. (2021a) conducted focus groups with 56 students during summer 2020 in a large public research university to deeper understand what the primary concerns related to the use of the library and identify their attitudes toward compliance with health safety protocols. The findings revealed that students were worried about how physical distancing would be possible given the high occupancy of the library pre-COVID, and whether there would be sufficient cleaning supplies. Students indicated that they preferred to be monitored by library employees in a friendly but firm way and were worried about how expectations for health safety protocols would be communicated when students returned to campus. Changes were made according to campus health safety guidelines as well as students’ feedback from focus groups. Changes included removing soft seating, reducing furniture density, and implementing a seat reservation system to ensure safe spaces that were appropriately physically distanced. To ensure sufficient cleaning supplies, the university centralized the purchase of PPE, added cleaning stations, and created signage to indicate where to find sanitizers. To monitor health safety protocols, library volunteer Wellness Ambassadors were assigned to oversee each floor. Multiple channels for disseminating library policies and health safety guidelines were used including social media, internal and external signage, and website news and information pages.

After implementing changes in the libraries, Scoulas *et al*., (2021b) followed up by conducting surveys during Fall 2020 to assess patrons’ experience in the library and whether their needs were met. Key findings from the survey revealed that patrons felt the library was clean and their health was not at risk, followed by the observation that expectations were clear to them and everyone was following the guidelines. However, three issues consistently reflected in the monthly survey throughout the semester included patrons wanting to have extended hours (longer weekdays and some weekend hours), to access group study rooms, and to be allowed to eat food and drink from disposable cups in the library. The authors mentioned that immediate changes such as additional sanitizing stations and clearer signage were made based on the patrons’ feedback. Some suggestions that were not feasible due to ongoing campus health safety concerns and University-wide policies included offering extended hours, accessing group study rooms, and changing the food and drink policy.

This article follows up on how library employees perceived serving as Wellness Ambassadors, and how patrons experienced the library with the health safety protocols in place during Fall 2021. It discusses the Wellness Ambassador program and changes made based on both their input and patron feedback. It also compares the results of the Fall 2021 patron survey with the Fall 2020 patron survey, which were published in the *Journal of Library Administration* (Scoulas *et al*., 2021b).

# Methods

The University Library analyzed two separate surveys distributed to library employees and patrons respectively. The surveys focused on how library employees experienced serving as a Wellness Ambassador as well as patrons’ experience using the library during Fall 2021, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and included the following questions:

* How are library employees’ overall experiences in serving as Wellness Ambassadors?
* How do patrons perceive their overall experience in the university library with the protocols in the library?
* How has the University used the findings from both surveys?
* What are the differences/commonalities in patrons’ library experience between Fall 2020 survey and Fall 2021 survey?
* What are the challenges the University Library encountered?

## Context

UIC is an urban public research university consisting of more than 33,000 undergraduate and graduate students who are enrolled in 16 colleges. The University has five library sites including Daley Library, three health sciences libraries (Chicago, Peoria and Rockford), and one law library. This article focuses on the Daley Library because this library serves about 75% of the University student population and the other libraries have different health safety guidelines based on local policies.

Gate count (Figure 1).It is not surprising that the gate count pre-COVID (from Fall 2017 to Fall 2019) was higher than Fall 2020 and Fall 2021. Prior to the pandemic, the number of open library hours was considerably higher, with 24-hour service five days a week. By comparison, during the pandemic, only about 42% of the hours have been offered since Fall 2020. As a result, the Daley Library has reached only about 62% of its pre-pandemic gate count as of Fall 2021.

*[Insert Figure 1 here]*

## Survey Instruments

*Wellness Ambassadors End of Shift Survey.* This survey was initially developed by the Assessment Coordinator and reviewed and revised by the Monitoring Compliance Working Group. The survey questions include Wellness Ambassadors’ overall experience monitoring compliance in the library, any incidents encountered during their shift, any issues and feedback, and location of shifts (see Appendix 1 for the Wellness Ambassadors End of Shift Survey).

*Patron Survey.* Most of the questions were adapted from the previous patron survey that was used for Daley Library and Library of Health Sciences Chicago during Fall 2020: library locations and spaces, overall experience in the library, primary reasons for using the library, patron status (student, faculty, or staff) (Scoulas *et al*., 2021b). Regarding a set of questions related to overall experience in the library, questions related to reserved seating were excluded because the University Library no longer required the use of a reservation system. Instead, a new question was added concerning whether patrons could easily find a seat. In terms of primary reasons visiting the library, new options were included: low contact pick up, get library materials (in-person circulation services), attend instructional sessions in the library classroom, and use spaces for distraction-reduced testing. One new question was taken from the University Library’s biennial survey regarding frequency of library visit (Scoulas & De Groote, 2021). To see the patron survey, please refer to Appendix 2.

*Data Collection*

*Wellness Ambassadors End of Shift Survey.* A total of 15 Wellness Ambassadors were invited to complete the End of Shift Survey. The online survey was distributed weekly throughout Fall 2021.

*Patron survey*. The online Patron Survey was distributed via multiple channels including sandwich board advertisements, flyers, display screens in the Daley Library, the Library website, and Library social media between September 24 - December 10, 2021.

*Data Analysis*

Data from Wellness Ambassadors End of Shift Survey and Patron Survey were exported in Excel, and both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were conducted in Excel. For the Patron Survey qualitative data, the feedback was grouped into nine topical areas based on the frequency of responses.

*Compensation*

*Wellness Ambassadors End of Shift Survey*. No compensation.

*Patron Survey*. Any UIC affiliated patrons who visited the Daley Library were invited to complete the survey and, if they chose to provide their contact information separately from their completed survey, were eligible to enter a drawing to win a $20 Amazon e-gift card. Three winners were selected each month during October, November, and December.

# Results

## Wellness Ambassador Program

A total of 75 responses were reported throughout the Fall 2021 semester. As shown in Figure 2, almost all Wellness Ambassadors reported that they felt safe serving as an ambassador (99%), that the monitoring compliance process was going well (97%), and that patrons followed the health safety guidelines (97%). Also, only 5% of Wellness Ambassadors reported difficulty with handling non-compliance. However, 12% of Wellness Ambassadors reported being challenged by patrons about expectations/guidelines/rules in the library. Twelve percent also reported feeling that there should be changes to the monitoring compliance process. The findings suggest that while having Wellness Ambassadors and monitoring compliance were going well, there were aspects of the program that needed to be reevaluated.

*[ Insert Figure 2 here]*

In the ambassadors’ End of Shift Survey, there were 123 responses to the multiple-choice question “Did you encounter any of the following during your shift?” The top two issues most selected were “Patrons not wearing masks” (49%) and “Patrons eating or drinking in the library” (28%). (Figure 3)

*[Insert Figure 3]*

### Issues and Suggestions

*Issues*. In addition to indicating that they encountered issues during their shift, Wellness Ambassadors were further asked to provide more detail in an open-ended question. Among 32 open-ended responses, 16 were related to wearing masks: patrons pulling masks down when out of sight and pulling them up when monitors were present (n=7); patrons not wearing masks (n=5); patrons wearing masks under the nose (n=4). The second more frequent issue was related to food and drink (n=6): eating in the library and drinking from disposable containers. The third most cited issue was tradespeople/contractors and University faculty not following health safety guidelines (not wearing masks or cooperating with the Health Check system) (n=3).

*Suggestions.* Wellness Ambassadors were asked to provide any comments or suggestions to improve the process of monitoring compliance. Among 14 responses, four were related to the food/drink policy, asking to re-consider allowing patrons to use disposable bottles and eat snacks in the library. Other suggestions were related to 1) shift assignments: expanding to cover all four floors, eliminating Wellness Ambassadors during less-busy hours (e.g., 7 a.m.- 8 a.m.), and 2) guidance on how to handle patrons attempting to circumvent the mask policy and faculty who resisted overall compliance.

## Patron Survey

A total of 146 participants completed the survey between September 27 and December 10, 2021. Most of the participants were students (95%). The other 5% of respondents were staff.

*Frequency of Library Use*

Sixty-four percent of library users visited the library multiple days in a week or more, whereas only 2% of the respondents never visited the library (Figure 4).

*[Insert Figure 4 here]*

**Primary Reasons**. Participants using spaces for studying, homework or research projects was the top reason for visiting the library, followed by using printers and to use spaces for online classes (Figure 5). Getting library materials was ranked 4th. Respondents using spaces for distraction-reduced testing and using computers were ranked as 5th and 6th.

*[Insert Figure 5 here]*

**Accommodations**. More than 80% of respondents reported that they did not need any accommodation. Three respondents noted that “My needs were not met.” However, they did not provide further information with respect to accommodations.

**Overall Experience**. Survey respondents were more than 93% positive on most statements about staff, expectations, safety, and cleanliness, but agreed less with statements about the availability of seats and building hours.

As shown in Figure 6, 96% of respondents rated “strongly agree” and “agree” with the three statements: “My experience with staff and security was positive”; “Expectations in the library are clear to me”; and “I feel the library is clean,” followed by “I feel my health is not at risk in the library (93%).” Compared with other statements, the highest number of respondents selected “disagree” and “strongly disagree” in response to "There were enough seats so that I could select one easily” and "The building hours worked with my schedule”, which received the highest percentage of “Strongly disagree” ratings.

*[Insert Figure 6 here]*

**Further Feedback**: Fifty-one participants provided further responses to “Are there any other comments or suggestions for what could improve your experience in the library?” Patron responses were grouped by nine categories including extended hours, positive experience, facility, outlets, masks, seats, food/drink policy, suggestions, and other. Twenty percent of the respondents provided feedback about wanting to have extended operating hours on weekends or later at night. The second highest number of comments (n=11) expressed a positive experience in the library and noted that the library was safe, reliable, a great place to meet friends and get work done, and that the library was doing an excellent job and that the staff was always “nice”.

Respondents also commented on facilities (n=6) related to temperature, elevator speed, and loud ventilation on the 1st floor. Five respondents commented that they wanted us to have more electrical outlets and charging ports. Some (n=4) were concerned about their peers not properly wearing masks or not following the health safety guidelines. Four respondents wanted to have more seats and desks. While some respondents (n=4) expressed that they would like to be allowed to eat food and drink from disposable bottles, two respondents agreed that there should be limitations to food and drinks. Patrons also suggested having orientation or information sessions (e.g., tours and explanations of how to find resources) and maps to navigate the library. Other feedback was about the need for individual study space and access to group study rooms, improving the website to find information, and signs and directions listing available services and where to go.

# Discussion

The primary role of the Wellness Ambassador was to ensure that everyone followed the health safety guidelines so that the library remained clean and safe. In addition to the End of Shift survey, Wellness Ambassadors also logged incidents based on time, location, and, when necessary, recorded patron information for serious altercations. Overall, findings from both the End of Shift and patron surveys indicated that library employees and patrons felt safe in the library. Overwhelmingly, patrons appeared to appreciate the rigor with which the Wellness Ambassadors and other Library staff enforced the guidelines, indicating that they felt the Library was clean and that their health was not at risk. They also agreed that the guidelines and expectations were clear to them, suggesting that they had no difficulty in following the rules (Figure 6).

With regards to following the safety guidelines, there was a difference between the experiences of Wellness Ambassadors and patrons. While most of the Wellness Ambassadors (97%) reported that patrons followed the health safety guidelines, only 89% of patrons indicated the same. It is possible that when Wellness Ambassadors were present, patrons knew they were being observed and were inclined to follow the health safety guidelines such as proper masking and no eating. However, when Wellness Ambassadors were not present (because they were roving, or if a shift was not covered), patrons might have taken off masks or eaten. There were not enough Wellness Ambassadors to cover all shifts in the 16-hour day, so there were periods during which monitors could not be present on every floor, and floors are too large for a single monitor to oversee the entire space without roving. Other Library employees were also encouraged to report any non-compliance to the circulation desk or via Chat with a Librarian to alert the Access Services Department of any problems.

When dealing with patrons including students, faculty, and staff, some Wellness Ambassadors repeatedly reported that some non-Library faculty challenged the protocols and even refused to cooperate with the guidelines (e.g., wearing masks). This presented special difficulties for the Wellness Ambassadors, as some faculty expressed that their time was “too valuable” to waste showing their health check badges, and one even told Library staff to “call the police” if they wanted to enforce the guidelines. Despite the verbal abuse directed at library staff and Wellness Ambassadors by patrons who felt the rules should not apply to them or did not take the guidelines seriously, Library staff enforced the protocols and non-compliant patrons were either brought into compliance or left the building voluntarily. Although there were a number of incidents of this nature, at no point was it necessary to actually contact building security or campus police to handle a situation. Being firm on the rules and consistent with implementation was key to maintaining order in the Library and ensuring a space for compliant patrons that was conducive to study.

Patrons expressed the most dissatisfaction about services previously offered by the Library which during the pandemic had been curtailed. In both multiple-choice responses and open-ended responses, patrons stated their desire to have longer open hours (such as were available prior to COVID). This finding was also reported in the previous survey that was conducted in Fall 2020 (Scoulas *et al.,* 2021b). The Library was not yet prepared to return to its pre-pandemic schedule due to numerous retirements and separations which left the Access Services Department short of the staff necessary to maintain all of the previous operational hours and services. However, based on this patron feedback, and recognizing the need for patrons to have access to quiet and safe study space during the critical time at the end of the semester, the Daley Library, in order to offer extended hours on weeknights and open on Sundays during the last week of instruction and finals week, hired temporary extra help and paid staff overtime to cover additional hours.

Both library employees and patrons had similar observations and experiences in terms of disposable bottle policies. Originally, the library did not allow patrons to bring disposable bottles into the library, in order to reduce any health risks associated with handling potentially contaminated waste. Patrons argued, however, that they reused the disposable bottles and that the bottles posed little risk when capped. Library employees also considered the disposable bottle a reusable container, so the library changed the policy to allow disposable bottles a few weeks into the semester. Disposable cups, however, because of exposed potential contamination on straws or lid lips, remained prohibited.

It was puzzling to see some patrons reported that there were not enough seats in the Daley Library, even though Wellness Ambassadors verified there were usually many open seats available on the 3rd and 4th floors. It is possible that patrons were not aware of what resources are available on the upper floors, and the building configuration of the Daley Library is such that access to these upper floors is somewhat concealed from the perspective of entering the building. Patrons also may have had a preference for popular seating areas that were consistently occupied on the 1st and 2nd floors.

Given that patrons tend to take advantage of surveys to voice concerns or complaints when they feel there is a problem or some issue that needs to be addressed, positive feedback was a surprising highlight of the responses, and the second-highest topic in comments where questions asked for an open-ended response. Patrons expressed appreciation for the Library staff (96%) and stated that they felt the Library was a reliable place to study. This was corroborated by multiple-choice responses that also indicated that their experience with the Library staff and security was positive.

The Assessment Coordinator presented these preliminary findings to various stakeholders throughout the semester including to the Monitoring Compliance Working Group, the head of Access Services, Daley Library administration, and at a Library faculty meeting in November 2021. Findings were also presented to the Steering Committee (consisting of department heads and administrators) on December 8, 2021.

The final report was shared with all Library employees mid-December 2021. Sharing and communicating the findings with various stakeholders was critical to inform library employees, many of whom were still working remotely, of what was happening the library and the data that would help drive decision-making about services going forward. Consistent messaging and soliciting feedback from all of the stakeholders in the library was important to communicating changes to staff working elsewhere as well receiving feedback about on those changes and the implementation of new practices (e.g., Wellness Ambassador monitoring and health safety guidelines). This practice will be ongoing to disseminate findings and review feedback on a regular basis.

# Implications and Conclusion

Because of the success of the Wellness Ambassador program, the Daley Library will continue to request volunteers to assist with the monitoring in the Library. A few changes will be made for spring 2022 based on Wellness Ambassador feedback. The ambassadors will cover only the busiest hours (11 a.m. - 5 p.m.) and floors (1st and 2nd floors), as according to the Ambassador logs, it is on these floors and during these times that most incidents occur. The 3rd and 4th floors are monitored by contract security guards, which is currently sufficient for the level of traffic in those spaces. There has been continuity from semester to semester for most of the volunteer Wellness Ambassadors since the Library reopened in 2020, so training has been reduced to a simple refresher. The training materials were also provided at a Library faculty meeting so that all Library faculty could review compliance and de-escalation procedures, and assist with monitoring ad hoc.

Even though it is still impossible to cover all of the open hours, having the Wellness Ambassadors present in the building has been valuable to maintaining safety and has the added benefit of providing timely onsite support for patrons with incidental questions or service needs. It is an essential function of the library to support students in their academic efforts by maintaining the building space in this safe and welcoming way.

The Library still wrestles with the challenge of additional service hours and a return to overnight operations. But appreciating the patrons’ desire for longer hours, the Library has prioritized hiring additional staff, and regular Sunday hours will be added for the spring 2022 semester. Patrons’ request for changes to the food and drink policy are not being considered further at this time beyond allowing resealable disposable containers; however staff and Wellness Ambassadors are taking a gentler approach with patrons who may have small snacks which they can consume while maintaining their masks. While consistency in applying the rules is critical to mass-compliance, the Library acknowledges that some flexibility is warranted as patrons may spend long hours in the building with limited options for safe spaces to go between classes or for lunch breaks. Regarding the lack of seats and outlets, the Library communications director will create signage and social media posts promoting the availability of seats and outlets on the 3rd and 4th floors. This messaging will also display on lobby screens at the entrances during spring 2022.

The goal of this assessment is to analyze patterns over time and to measure the current patrons’ needs in order to use those findings for decision-making while still in a fluid period of uncertainty. Freshman classes entering between Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 have never experienced the pre-COVID library, and librarians do not know what these students expect to experience in the building. For these reasons, future surveys to obtain feedback from patrons will concentrate on these additional areas of support: physical library experience (specifically physical distancing, wearing masks, food and drink, etc.); Library services (such as Chat with a Librarian, faculty Zoom consultations, and use of databases remotely); physical space (patron preferences for optimizing their study experience). When library decision-makers are in doubt about policies and practices, they should consult with the groups directly affected because they experience the greatest impact from changes in policies and practices. This article demonstrates the importance of ensuring that both employees and patrons feel heard during this time. Administrators should have the courage to admit they do not always have the answers, and recognize these stakeholders can contribute to mutually beneficial decisions in the Library.

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Figure 1. Total gate count numbers between Fall 2017 and Fall 2021 at Daley Library

Figure 2. Wellness Ambassadors overall experience in the library during their shifts

Figure 3. Incidents reported by Wellness Ambassadors

Figure 4. Frequency of Library Use during Fall 2021

Figure 5. Primary reasons visiting the library

Figure 6. Patrons overall experience in the library

Appendix A

Fall 2021 Wellness Ambassador End of Shift Survey

Dear Colleagues and Wellness Ambassadors,

Thank you for your commitment to make our library safe! Please take a moment to complete the survey at the end of each week throughout the Fall 2021 semester. Your information will be valuable to improve the monitoring compliance process and support your needs.  Also, this survey can be used for anyone who is on site at Daley Library observes any issues or incidents.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Assessment Coordinator.

Q1. How was your overall experience monitoring compliance in the library? Please rate your level of agreement on each following statements.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly agree (4) | Agree (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) | Not Applicable (0) |
| It seems that the monitoring compliance process is going well.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I had difficulty with handling non-compliance.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I was challenged by patrons about the expectations/guidelines/rules in the library.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| It seems that patrons followed the health safety guidelines.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I feel that we need to change the monitoring compliance process.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I was able to change shift to the next person on time. |  |  |  |  |  |
| I feel safe serving as a Wellness Ambassador.  |  |  |  |  |  |

Q2. Did you encounter any of the following during your shift? Please check all that apply.

* Patrons refusing to wear masks
* Patrons eating or drinking in the library
* Patrons requiring accommodations
* Patrons problem with technology (e.g., printer, ID scanner)
* Patrons cooperation with the campus Health Check system
* Patrons knowledge of the campus Health Check system
* Other: Please specify the issue. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Q3. What issues did you encounter during your shift?

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Display This Question:

If Did you encounter any of the following during your shift? Please check all that apply. = Patrons refusing to wear masks

Or Did you encounter any of the following during your shift? Please check all that apply. = Patrons eating or drinking in the library

Or Did you encounter any of the following during your shift? Please check all that apply. = Patrons requiring accommodations

Or Did you encounter any of the following during your shift? Please check all that apply. = Patrons problem with technology (e.g., printer, ID scanner)

Or Did you encounter any of the following during your shift? Please check all that apply. = Other: Please specify the issue.

Or Did you encounter any of the following during your shift? Please check all that apply. = Patrons cooperation with the campus Health Check system

Or Did you encounter any of the following during your shift? Please check all that apply. = Patrons knowledge of the campus Health Check system

Q4. Please tell us more about the issues you selected.

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Q5. Are there any other comments or suggestions to improve the process of monitoring compliance in the library?

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Q6. What floor/station were your shifts? (Optional)

* Door monitor
* First floor
* Second floor
* Third floor

**Appendix B**

UIC Daley Library Patron Survey Fall 2021

Dear Students, Staff and Faculty,
Thank you for visiting the Daley Library. Please take a moment to complete this survey. We would like your feedback on your experiences in the library. Your feedback will be valuable for making improvement and supporting your needs.

If you would like to participate in the lottery, please enter your contact information. Your personal information is not linked to your responses. Three winners will be selected each month during September, October and November.

If you have questions about this survey, you may contact the Assessment Coordinator.

Thank you,
UIC Daley Library

Q1. How often did you visit the Daley Library in the past month?

* Daily
* Multiple days in a week
* Once a week
* 2-3 times
* Once
* Never

Q2. What are the reasons you visited the library? Please select all that apply.

* Low contact pick up
* Get library materials (e.g., books and course reserve)
* Attend library instructional sessions in IDEA Commons classroom
* Use printers
* Use computers
* Use spaces for online classes
* Use spaces for studying, homework or research project
* Use spaces for distraction reduced testing
* Other. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Q3. How was your overall experience in the library? Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statement.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly agree (4) | Agree (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) |
| The building hours worked with my schedule.  |  |  |  |  |
| There were enough seats so that I could select one easily  |  |  |  |  |
| There were enough cleaning supplies (e.g., sanitizers)  |  |  |  |  |
| I feel my health is not at risk in the library  |  |  |  |  |
| I feel the library is clean.  |  |  |  |  |
| Expectations in the library are clear to me (e.g., wearing masks at all times and no food/no eating rules)  |  |  |  |  |
| It seems that everyone was following the health safety guidelines in the library  |  |  |  |  |
| My experience with library staff and security was positive  |  |  |  |  |

Q3-1. Please tell us about any issues that you encountered in the library.

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Q4. If you required any accommodations due to a disability, were your needs met?

* My needs were met
* My needs were not met
* I did not need any accommodations

Display This Question:

If If you required any accommodations due to a disability, were your needs met? = My needs were not met

Q4-1. Please tell us more about any issues you encountered with respect to accommodations.

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Q5. Are there any other comments or suggestions for what could improve your experience in the library?

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Q6. I am a:

* Student
* Staff
* Faculty