

## Learning Commons Event Planning Focus Group for Fall 2009 Events

---

### Focus Group #1 – Wednesday, June 24, 2009

---

6 subjects:

Post-baccalaureate, French

Undergraduate, Math

4+ years, Biology

Sophomore, Nursing

Post-baccalaureate, Biology

Graduate student, School Counseling

- 1. The library periodically hosts events for students. In the past, for example, there have been film screenings and, at the beginning of the semester, a day of activities called Freshmen Friday. What do you think about the library hosting events like this?**

**Summary:** The general trend in responses to this question was that events might be good for other students and/or younger students, but not for me. A few subjects questioned the appropriateness of the library hosting events such as the ones described, because they might interfere with students trying to study and because of the expense.

#### Individual Responses:

- Good idea for incoming freshmen to experience about campus life and information about what the library offers: research, software, etc.
- Fine for Fridays, since there aren't many people at the library that day and not many classes on Friday. Otherwise it could interfere with regular studying. Good for freshmen, because they often don't come to the library until they need to for a school project.
- My first thought is, "Oh, that's where my fees are going." Is that the best way to spend the school's resources?
- A good idea, because it gets students acclimated to the library, but it promotes the library as an entertainment center. The library isn't a place to have fun—it's a place to study.
- Might appeal to some people but not me. I don't like "big random social events. It makes me nervous."
- At 17 when I was a freshman and worked in the library, maybe I would be interested. Events would be alright, especially if they provided opportunities to learn about research, finding things, and becoming acclimated to the library.

- 2. What kinds of events would get you to come to the library? Put another way, what kinds of events would you make time to attend at the library?**

**Summary:** Training sessions/workshops, book signings, and guest speakers were the suggestions mentioned most frequently.

#### Individual Responses:

- Focus groups like this (2)

- A DVD drive where people can donate their DVDs/DVD swap (2)
- Training classes like the Digital Aquarium provides
- A peer mentor system that would pair younger/inexperienced students who are struggling academically with upperclassmen and that would meet in the library to study with them and mentor them
- Writing workshops
- Research workshops
- Book signings (2)
- Guest speakers (2)
- “Sophisticated events” like events held at bookstores
- Book club
- Math software workshops
- Study skills seminars

### 3. Tell me your ideas for events that the library could host.

**Summary:** Since most subjects suggested ideas when they answered question 2, I asked subjects to expand upon the ideas they presented in question 2. Responses were varied.

#### Individual Responses:

- Study skills: The Counseling Center could lead this.
- Time management if it were tied to a study skills workshop
- Book signings: Authors of popular fiction, such as the authors of *Fight Club*, *Twilight*, *Trainspotting*.
- Some authors of interest might be specific to students in their major.
- Ask the English department what books they’re teaching students and choose one of those authors to speak and sign books.
- Georgia authors
- Academic/college survival skills workshops for first-year students and returning (after a long absence) students

### 4. What do you think about the library offering training classes on software programs or new technologies?

**Summary:** Subjects unanimously thought that it would be a good idea for the library to offer training classes. Suggested topics varied with no repeats.

#### Individual Responses:

- Math software
- Burning CDs
- Web design and graphic design using Macs – like what the Digital Aquarium offers
- Windows Vista operating system
- Microsoft Office products, particularly PowerPoint
- Conducting research online
- SPSS
- PAWS and other new GSU interfaces
- Computer basics for the new/returning/”mature” student

- uLearn – the basics of getting starting, navigating, etc.
- Entrance exams for grad school like the GRE, LSAT, etc. - Overview, what to expect, preparing for, registering for, that GSU is a testing center, that One Stop Shop offers a voucher for a GRE discount
- Host a panel discussion that explains how students can find out about and apply for GRA positions, work study positions, etc.

**Other suggestions that came up - not really training topics:**

- Help students form study groups/collaboration groups
- Help students organize study groups through Facebook. Some students try to organize through uLearn, but it doesn't really work. uLearn isn't a place to socialize.
- Start a program for new students to get help from experienced students (mentoring)
- Start a program that will facilitate networking among students from difference sections of the same course

**5. Tell me about whether you would attend an event at the library if you weren't at the library already.**

**Summary:** In general, subjects said they are unlikely to attend an event at the library if they're not already in the library for another reason. The event would have to be very targeted to specific interests of the individual.

**Individual Responses:**

- Probably not – too hard to get to the library and park
- Would depend on the event – maybe if it's something of interest to me and if I'm on campus already
- Would depend on 2 things: timing and the event topic
- Not unless it were really attractive/interesting to me
- Probably not
- Not unless it were really attractive/interesting to me – maybe if I'm on campus already

**6. Tell me about whether you would be more likely to attend an event at the library if there was an incentive attached. For example, extra credit for a class, snacks, etc.**

**Follow up if they don't suggest incentives: What incentives would make the event worthwhile?**

**Summary:** Subjects unanimously responded that incentives would make them more likely to attend an event at the library. All the incentives they brainstormed were financial in nature or material items. Only when prompted did subjects consider extra credit from a professor as a possible incentive, but they responded that there would have to be "enough points" as compared to the length of the event to make attendance worthwhile.

**Individual Responses:**

- Food
- PantherCash (2)
- Bookstore credit or voucher

- Giftcards
- Aquarium, High Museum of Art, or zoo passes
- Sporting event tickets
- Items from local vendors near campus (like Walter's)
- Lunch or something from restaurants around campus – specifically those on Broad Street
- Saxbys – free coffee or muffin
- Books
- Free parking for events (very popular suggestion)

## 7. How do you find out about events going on around campus?

**Summary:** Responses were varied. The most frequently mentioned item was flyers, and the most unique item mentioned was through Facebook friends.

### Individual Responses:

- Flyers in various locations
- Flyers in General Classroom Building (2)
- Flyers in Arts and Humanities by the Post Office
- Flyers in the entryway of Sparks Hall
- GSU website – mainly the home page and the calendar
- GSU website calendar
- Through Facebook friends
- Stall Times

### Follow up: How would you like to find out about events going on around campus?

- Flyers in Saxbys
- Emails (2)
- Flyers are ok
- All units on campus, including student organizations, should use the main GSU calendar online and keep it updated.
- GSU home page (2) – Seems like the best way to reach people.
- Stall Times

### Additional comments:

- Stall Times is great.
- I wish the campus did a better job of letting us know about events.

## 8. During a typical semester, what days and times are you most available to attend events on campus?

**Summary:** Weekday afternoons and evenings are best, especially Thursdays.

### Individual Responses:

- Tuesday and Thursday starting at 5 PM – 6 PM
- Thursday after 7:30 PM
- Monday – Thursday after 3 PM

- Tuesday from 12 PM – 5 PM
- Thursday after 4 PM
- Monday - Thursday after 4 PM

**Additional comment:** The problem is that most events on campus are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so there are a lot of competing events.

#### **9. Do you live on campus or off campus?**

**Summary:** All subjects live off campus.

#### **Additional Comments/Suggestions**

- Get more new release/popular DVDs.
- Get a vending machine.
- Renovate Library South
- Allow us to print double-sided.
- Get a fax machine.

## Focus Group #2 - Thursday, June 25, 2009

---

5 subjects:

Junior, Criminal Justice

Senior, Sociology

3<sup>rd</sup> year, Computer Information Systems

Senior, Psychology/Sociology

Sophomore-Junior, French/Nutrition

- 1. The library periodically hosts events for students. In the past, for example, there have been film screenings and, at the beginning of the semester, a day of activities called Freshmen Friday. What do you think about the library hosting events like this?**

**Summary:** In general, subjects thought that it was a good idea for the library to host events, because events will get more people into the library. Several students were unaware that the library hosted events.

### Individual Responses:

- Are they really necessary? People already come to the library in droves. I guess it would be good for PR.
- I think it's interesting, because it gives us something to do during our off hours to relax.
- Lots of people come to the library, but I also know lots of people who never do. Events might be a good way to attract people, especially freshmen. I had no idea the library hosted events like this.
- Good idea. The study break last semester was great. Good way to find out about the library and what it offers, too.
- Good idea, but I haven't heard about events the library has done in the past, except for the study breaks. (2)

### Other suggestions:

- Host events multiple times in order to accommodate the most people.
- Maybe the library should co-host an event with an academic department. This might bring in more people. The library could provide space for the event.

- 2. What kinds of events would get you to come to the library? Put another way, what kinds of events would you make time to attend at the library?**

**Summary:** Training classes and workshops on various topics were mentioned most frequently as events subjects would make time to attend.

### Individual Responses:

- Anything that involves food and is held in the evening; seminars about research methods
- Seminars about study habits, using software like EndNote and Zotero, how to prepare for grad school
- Classes to teach us about research methods, how to apply to grad school, anything that involves an incentive for attending
- Anything that's offered at a good time for me

- Movies like the ones you showed during the study break
- Classes to teach you how to type, seminars on study habits by the Counseling Center

**Other suggestions:**

- The study break was nice; you should do that again.
- Offer a variety of events to appeal to a variety of people

**3. Tell me your ideas for events that the library could host.**

**Summary:** Responses varied.

**Individual Responses:**

- Seminar on all the library's services and what you can get help with in the library. This should be offered at the beginning of a student's career here.
- Basic how-to classes, such as typing, how to do research online
- Book readings
- How to use GIL, GALILEO, and periodical indexes
- Host a writing group/club for people on campus who like to write
- Book club
- Sessions to highlight faculty authors
- Meet-and-greet with liaison librarians, like the meet-and-greet my academic department hosts for students and advisors

**4. What do you think about the library offering training classes on software programs or new technologies?**

**Summary:** All subjects but one thought that it would be a good idea for the library to offer training classes. The one outlier wondered whether it was worth it for the library to offer software training when it is available online (eTraining). Suggested topics varied with no repeats.

**Individual Responses:**

- How to use Microsoft Office 2007 applications
- GIL
- GALILEO
- How to find articles
- Macs
- SPSS
- EndNote

**5. Tell me about whether you would attend an event at the library if you weren't at the library already.**

**Summary:** Subjects are unlikely to attend an event at the library if they are not at the library already. Their attendance would be very dependent on the topic and the scheduling.

**Individual Responses:**

- I once planned to attend something the library advertised then forgot about it.
- It depends on the event.
- It depends on the time and my schedule. For example, evenings are impossible for me.
- It depends on the time and my schedule. Also, I've never heard about any library events.
- Basically, we would come if it was convenient.
- I might come if I heard about the event in advance.
- Maybe if food were offered

**Other suggestions:**

- Market events through Stall Times.
- Market events through The Signal, and make sure The Signal is distributed from the library.

**6. Tell me about whether you would be more likely to attend an event at the library if there was an incentive attached.**

**Follow up if they don't suggest incentives: What incentives would make the event worthwhile?**

**Summary:** While subjects were definitely interested in incentives, they did not convince me that their decision to attend would be based on whether an incentive would be offered.

**Individual Responses:**

- Food
- It depends on the event.
- Giveaways/raffles for anything, not necessarily big prizes
- Flash drives
- The incentive should be that you're learning something that you can't learn anywhere else.
- Free software: Have a drawing for free software during a software class

**Other suggestions:**

- The department I work for gave away 2 iPods and had an Atlanta Hawks player come in and sign autographs. Lots of students came in.
- Remind people about/market eTraining better.
- Set up sessions where people can come in and use the eTraining tutorials and library employees will be there to help them.

**7. How do you find out about events going on around campus?**

**Summary:** Responses varied. Facebook was mentioned more than once.

**Individual Responses:**

- The Signal
- Word-of-mouth
- Flyers
- Posters

- Emails
- Referrals from different offices: For example, if you go to one campus office for help with something, sometimes you see a flyer for an event hosted by another campus unit.
- Student Life and Leadership calendar
- Pouncin' Around (online calendar)
- Facebook events and friends (2)
- Professors
- Flyers in General Classroom Building

**Follow up: How would you like to find out about events going on around campus?**

- Banners outside of the library
- Emails
- The Signal – It has a calendar
- Facebook
- Stall Times

**Other suggestions:**

- The library should publish a calendar of its events like Student Life and Leadership.
- Stall Times should include a calendar

**8. During a typical semester, what days and times are you most available to attend events on campus?**

**Summary:** There was no trend among responses. Although everyone responded, some subjects were reluctant to answer, because each semester is so different.

**Individual Responses:**

- No good answer – Varies from semester to semester
- No good answer - Changes a lot
- The library should host events on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, because there are fewer classes and fewer other meetings on those days
- Monday, Wednesday, and Friday would only be good for those people who live on campus. I live off campus and wouldn't come to campus for an event on one of my off days.
- Monday – Thursday after 1 PM
- Monday or Wednesday because nothing else is scheduled

**Additional comments:**

- The problem with having events at the library is that there's nowhere to park. More people might come to events at the library if they could park easily.
- Try to schedule things on multiple days, so that more people can attend.

**9. Do you live on campus or off campus?**

**Summary:** All subjects currently live off campus. One subject lives on campus during regular (fall and spring) semesters.

### **Additional Comments/Suggestions**

- Extend hours: Open earlier
- Lower printing costs. It costs a penny per page at the honors lounge.
- Thanks for putting the library button in the top-right corner of the GSU home page.
- Provide more full-text articles through the databases.
- More copy machines
- Another machine to add money to my PantherCard
- Cafeteria area with vending machines
- Just vending machines would be fine
- More security, especially at night

### **Recommendations**

---

1. **General Recommendation:** Subjects did not seem very interested in the library hosting events. They would be inclined to attend an event only if they were already in the library and if they found the topic very compelling. The recommendation is to be judicious and critical when considering offering any event, especially those that are resource-intensive (expensive, requiring much employee time, etc.) Additionally, it seems that the more targeted an event is to a particular population, the more successful it might be.
2. **Event Types and Incentives:** If the library decides to host events, the recommendation is to start with a training class or workshop rather than something like a book reading. Subjects seemed more inclined to attend, for example, a software class or study skills workshop than other event types. An incentive might help boost attendance, but the recommendation is to keep incentives small/inexpensive initially.
3. **Marketing:** If more events are to be hosted by the library, consider a more extensive marketing effort for these events. Most subjects were unaware that the library ever hosts events; however, a few subjects attended last semester's study breaks. Students claim to read flyers, but not necessarily the flyers in the library. Consider posting flyers in General Classroom Building. Consider using email as a marketing tool. It would help if the email message could be targeted to a particular population (for example, email only freshmen/first year students for an event specifically for freshmen). Consider marketing more through Facebook. Subjects learn about events from their Facebook friends who are attending events.
4. **Scheduling:** Subjects' availability varies widely, and the recommendation is to schedule the same event two times, if feasible. For example, one instance should be on Monday or Wednesday, and the other should be on Tuesday or Thursday. Late afternoon/early evening seems to be the best time of day.