Top-Tier Training: Finessing Our Front Line Student Assistants
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The Method Behind the Madness.

The twelve-week training program was piloted using a group of five newly-hired SAs and two veteran SAs. The program was divided into nine modules, each module covering a specific area of User Services.

Identifying Problems.
Creating Solutions.

Due to outdated training materials, unclear job duties, and low morale, librarians and staff at the University of Michigan-Dearborn Mardigian Library saw the need to create a standardized training program for student assistants (SAs) working in the User Services Department.

With the need to effectively train a cluster of newly-hired student assistants, University of Michigan-Dearborn librarians and staff launched a twelve-week training program in fall 2016.

The twelve-week training program was piloted using a group of five newly-hired SAs and two veteran SAs. The program was divided into nine modules, each module covering a specific area of User Services.

For every module, SAs were given a short study guide followed by a written assessment that tested their knowledge of the material. Several modules included a fun, hands-on assessment (i.e. role-playing, simulated reference interview, scavenger hunts) that added humor and variety to training.

Cumulative assessments were given at the end of every third module to help SAs retain previously learned information. The higher score on the cumulative assessment won a $25 gift card.

Librarians and staff held weekly meetings to discuss the training program timeline, content, assessment design, division of tasks, etc.

Module Feedback

Module 3 Feedback

- Did not learn anything new (0 SAs)
- Learned one new thing (2 SAs)
- Learned 2-3 new things (1 SA)
- Learned 4+ new things (2 SAs)

Module 4 Feedback

- Did not learn anything new (0 SAs)
- Learned one new thing (3 SA)
- Learned 2-3 new things (2 SAs)
- Learned 4+ new things (3 SAs)

Module 7 Feedback

- Scenarios in which the patron is not polite and is giving the employee a hard time.
- How to handle an angry patron with a printer problem when ITS is gone for the day.
- Scenario in which the patron is not polite and is giving the employee a hard time.
- Someone wants to have the group study rather than two and they get angry that they can't.