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Self-Checkout Machine Assessment 2013/14 Report

Nelson Poynter Memorial Library.

Kaya van Beynen

Camielle Swenson

Virginia Champion

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Study Objectives
In September 2010 a self-checkout machine was installed in the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library. This machine was located directly on the path out of the library, across from the Circulation Desk. Since installation, the self-checkout machine is only used for approximately 5% of book checkout at the library. This assessment was undertaken to gain insight into why the self-checkout machine has not been utilized by USFSP student, staff, and faculty as much as anticipated and how usage can be increased.

Methodology:
Student workers with a laptop asked library users that were checking out books, at either the self-checkout machine or at the circulation service desk, to complete a short online survey. Candy was used as an incentive to participation. The survey asked whether the user had 1) ever used the self-checkout machine and 2) why he/she had or had not used it, and 3) what changes could be made to make the service more appealing.

Results
A total of 99 respondents completed the self-checkout assessment. 73% of the respondents were USF or USFSP students, 7% were USFSP faculty, 9% were USFSP staff, and the remaining individuals were either from another college or university, or were community members with borrowing privileges.

A total of 28% of the respondents reported using the library’s self-checkout machine, however only 4 individuals reported regularly using this service. Respondents primarily used the self-checkout machine for its convenience (65%), because it was faster than the circulation desk service (29%), and for increased privacy (6%).

Among those respondents that had never used the library’s self-checkout machine, 37% were not aware of the machine, 25% preferred interacting with people or had a question for a staff member, 13% used the circulation desk strictly out of habit, and 13% were unsure how to use the machine.

The majority of respondents had never asked for assistance (86%) on how to use the self-checkout machine. Their reasons included:

• They were too busy to ask for help (30%),
• They didn’t need help with the machine (18%),
• They were too embarrassed to ask for assistance (15%), or
• That library staff had been too busy or unable to help (15%).

Response to Findings:
The primary response to these results is to raise user awareness and reduce user technological insecurity. Thus, the Access Service Department at the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library will:

• Increase signage and advertising – perhaps have a large sign that says “Express Check-out” attract attention and to advertise the self-checkout machine as providing a quick and convenient service to the students.
• Increase the availability and visibility of staff for assistance – perhaps post a student worker at the self-checkout machine for one week at the start of the fall semester to promote and provide instruction on its use.
• Consider relocation possibilities