

Meet Them Where They Are: Improving Outreach to Graduate Students

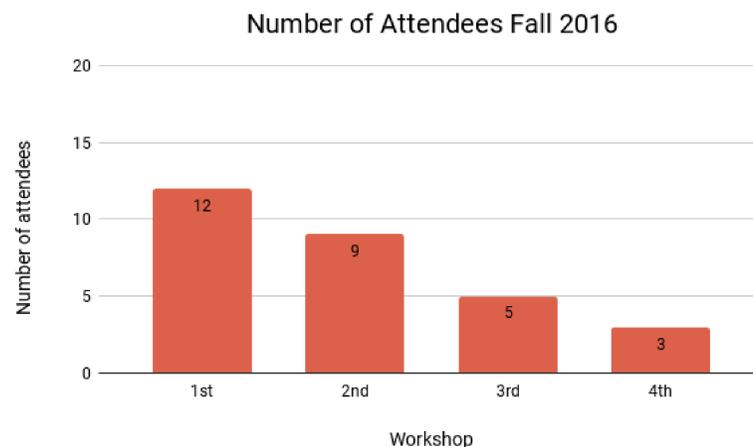
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The Challenge

- Graduate students can sometimes be **overlooked**: no comprehensive library instruction programs.
- Their professors **may assume** students already have needed research skills.
- Graduate students typically **don't have a common series of classes** across disciplines.
- International students can be at a disadvantage as they may come from **a different library and academic culture**.
- **Discipline-specific needs** make creating programs that benefit all graduate students difficult.

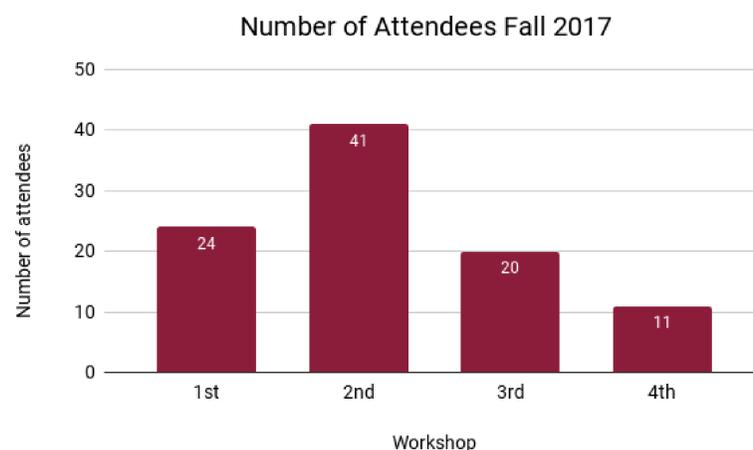
Fall 2016

- Following a conversation with the graduate school, the library hosted **four orientations** for graduate students covering the major ways the library supports them:
 - **Research Resources** (databases, library liaisons, citation managers, for-credit classes)
 - **Accessing Materials** (checking out books and technology, interlibrary loan)
 - **Scholarly Communication** (theses/dissertations, OER, institutional repository)
 - **Data Services** (data management/consults)
- **One-hour sessions** were held on Friday mornings in September. The graduate school provided breakfast and coffee.
- 30-40 students signed up for each session, but **attendance was very low**.



Fall 2017

- Despite low attendance in fall 2016, **feedback was positive enough** that it was decided to run the program a second year, with modifications.
- Sessions began the **first week of school**.
- The sessions were held on Thursdays at 5, with **pizza served**.
- Marketing efforts were **increased**, with a registration link available on the graduate school's website.



Increasing Enrollment

- 2017 attendance was **dramatically better** than 2016 attendance. Why?
 - **Better marketing**: The graduate school advertised the 2017 orientations on their new graduate student orientation webpage.
 - **Better timing**: The workshops started earlier in the semester and were held in the evening.
 - **Better food**: The pizza was a huge draw, more so than the coffee and breakfast in 2016.
 - **Word of mouth**: Several students brought friends or told others about the workshops.

The Future

- In 2018, the orientations will be continued, though the content will be **redistributed into two sessions** instead of four, since attendance dropped so dramatically after the second one.
- The marketing efforts that had an impact in 2017 will be continued, while **other ways of marketing** will be explored.
- The orientations will be one part of **increased outreach** to graduate students.
- A graduate student survey was distributed in April 2018, and the libraries will be trying out **additional workshops** not tied to a particular course.
- A **graduate student newsletter** is in development to let students know about library services and workshops that could benefit them. Students at the orientations will have a chance to sign up for it.