> **We are proactive and strive to anticipate the emerging needs of our user communities."**
>
> Abigail DiPaolo

Launching an App to Address Emerging Patron Needs

Rutgers University is an R1 institution and the largest university in New Jersey. More than 67,600 students are enrolled on four distinct campuses. Over 8,000 full- and part-time faculty teach and research across 29 schools and colleges.

The Rutgers University Libraries (RUL) system supports researchers, faculty, and students from 26 libraries on all four campuses. RUL's mission is, in part, to *"...advance academic excellence and foster inclusion."* Staff lives the mission through RUL's guiding principles and values which include statements on access and service:

- *"We respond to the growing research needs of our communities by providing, improving, and expanding access to virtual and physical resources."*

- *"We are guided by a user-centered philosophy. We provide responsive services that are tailored to user needs and endeavor to exceed their expectations."*

- *"We are proactive and strive to anticipate the emerging needs of our user communities."*

Anticipating Emerging Needs

Abigail DiPaolo, Executive Director of Administration & Technology, and her colleagues recognized that interactions with the library should be quick, easy, and personalized to meet user expectations.

As an Alma/Primo customer, DiPaolo and her team took on the challenge and opportunity to partner with Ex Libris as a Development Partner for the Library Mobile App.

RUL and Ex Libris worked together to develop an implementation process for the Library Mobile App and conducted beta testing with students from a variety of disciplines. RUL's implementation experience differs from current implementations, but DiPaolo's top advice for new customers *"...is make sure you have the right people at the table, your IT folks, your developers, your communications person is a huge one, very critical."*

The RUL IT staff found the app manager interface to be very intuitive during implementation and for ongoing backend support. When the staff had questions about integrations and documentation, the Ex Libris partners were always available.

A User-Centered Philosophy

Determining the most essential services and content to deliver through Library Mobile can be a challenge. DiPaolo and the RUL implementation team relied on usage data from the library's site and student feedback.

Understanding how patrons used the site on mobile devices provided direction for the initial selection of services included in Library Mobile. Feedback from student beta testers provided another important layer of information about engagement with app content. DiPaolo and the team deeply valued the student feedback. She remarked, *"I think that was really critical to let the student voices be the guide and not necessarily what we all thought was pretty or usable."*
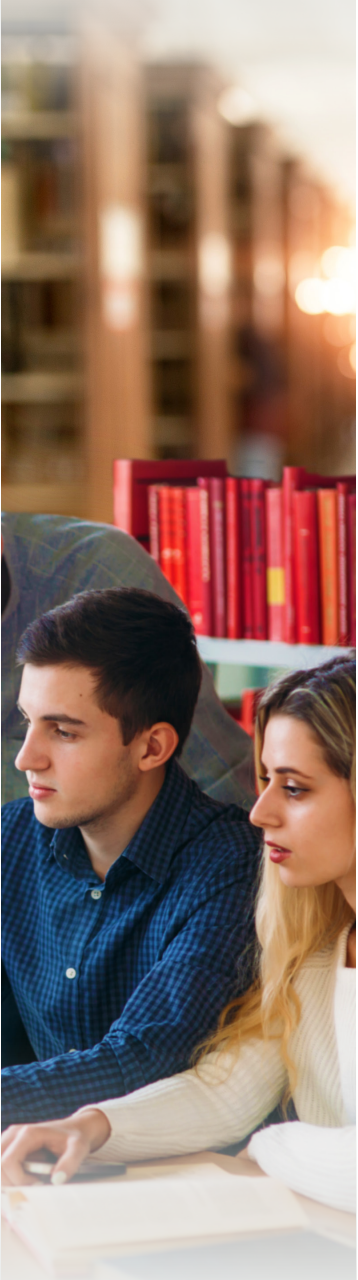
Providing, Improving, and Expanding Access

RUL's Library Mobile App includes access to the library's most used services like booking a study space and highlights less visible services such as events.

Website and app testing revealed students did not think library held events. Library Mobile provides RUL with a new way to increase awareness of library events while students are engaged in other library-related activities.

App push notifications and alerts further enable librarians to promote awareness to library services, activities, and resource availability. Notifications appear directly on students' mobile devices, rather than piling up in email inboxes.

Marketing the App to the Student Body

Before Library Mobile officially launched students involved in the beta testing created some buzz on campus.

When the app went live to all Rutgers students and academic staff the RUL communications, team supported the launch with a multifaceted campaign that included social media, posters and table tents in the library, table tents in the dining halls, tabling at university events, contests, giveaways, and free pizza. Every promotional piece included QR codes directing patrons to download the app.

Within Library Mobile the team used Quick Polls to engage students by asking a question about the library or a fun trivia question plus another chance to win a prize. After the launch, DiPaolo and the team wanted to maintain these touchpoints with students to keep them engaged and connected to the library.

They continue to use Quick Polls in three ways:

1. Gauge awareness
2. Measure satisfaction
3. Have fun!
4. Highlight a feature

The Quick Polls not only provide information for staff but, as DiPaolo says, *"...sometimes just brightening their day with a silly question."*

The Library Mobile App includes analytics and dashboards to understand how the app is used in real time. This enables app administrators to respond quickly with adjustments that improve the user experience. DiPaolo is excited about the increasing user registrations, learning from the data, and making future enhancements to Library Mobile.

What's next for RUL and Library Mobile?

The RUL team will continue to personalize Library Mobile for Rutgers students and academic staff based on the usage data and feedback. Reflecting on the possibilities, DiPaolo remarked, *"...it's all about what you make of it and how much you want to start putting into it out of the box. It can do a ton of things... what do you want to layer in... how much do you want to do in order to just get it out there and use it... it's going to continue to grow and ebb and flow."*

To learn more about how RUL is leveraging Library Mobile, register for this on-demand webinar.