

Episode 10: Return to Campus – Part 3

Nicole Thomas

Welcome to the third episode of our Fall 2021 Return To Campus Series. I'm your host, Nicole Thomas, Undergraduate Education Librarian here at UB. Today, we'll be talking with several members of our Library staff about reopening campus library spaces, some of the many services we offer, and what students and staff can expect this fall. So, we're going to begin today with talking with Sarah Patton, Abbott Library Evening Supervisor. Hi, Sarah

Sarah Patton

Hey Nicole, how are you?

Nicole Thomas

I'm great. Can you tell me what's new this year in the Abbott Library?

Sarah Patton

Yeah, absolutely. So, let's see. I think the last time people were on campus in full was March 2020, so quite a bit has changed. We're still kind of doing a lot of COVID protocol. It'll be great to have people back on campus, but we're going to stick with a lot of our circulation policies that are that have been in place throughout COVID. So, we're doing a lot of self-checkout. We're keeping longer borrowing periods and suspending fines and fees. We're continuing some of our great, hopefully great processes that we put in place to make things easier for people to get things no matter where they are. So, we're doing a heavy emphasis on purchasing eBooks. And we're also doing a lot of personal delivery. So, one of the great things that we implemented that COVID really gave us a push to start with expanding our personal delivery service so you can have items delivered to your local address. So, for students, that might be an off-campus apartment or dorm room or your permanent address if you're still learning virtually. And then faculty and staff, of course, can have things delivered to their office or home so that is staying, which is awesome. Think about other? Any other things that might happen? We have new self-checkout machines. We also have new self-checkout apps which would be great to help reduce kind of the congestion of the desk that we were getting sometimes and make things a lot easier for our patrons. We also have. I'm sorry, I'm trying to think. Much of our services are saying the same, which is, I think, the great thing when we're talking about returning to campus and kind of going back to our full operation. So, our hours have really not been affected. We're still open till midnight at Abbott. And we're still here for you, we're still offering a lot of the same services. We're doing some virtual-type reference, which might be a little bit different for students. So, our reference librarians are still available the way they always have them. But

rather than meeting with them in person at the desk, you will be given some information to call them and set up a Zoom with them.

Nicole Thomas

Thank you very much. And would you like to share your thoughts on returning to campus after being virtual for the past year and a half due to the COVID 19 pandemic?

Sarah Patton

Yeah, so a lot of people in delivery services have been back for a while, so we came back in August of last year. So, what I think is really exciting for us in our department, especially someone like me who's on the frontline is just starting to see the return of our normal population. So, for the past year or so since we came back, we had that low 20 percent population and it was very quiet. It was kind of strange to interact with students in such a low energy environment. So, it's really exciting, I think, to see everyone returning to campus and you get that sort of normal beginning of the semester energy, which is always really exciting for us, so I'm pumped. I think we have a great campus community. So even though some COVID protocols are still in place with masks and stuff, I think that it's still largely going to feel like a sort of typical semester with that energy and everyone being on campus and being able to work together.

Nicole Thomas

That's great. Thank you very much, Sarah.

Sarah Patton

Thank you.

Nicole Thomas

And up next, we have Marnie Mancuso, Facilities Planning and Management Officer. Hi, Marnie

Marnie Mancuso

Hi, Nicole.

Nicole Thomas

So, can you tell me what's new this year in Facilities?

Marnie Mancuso

Yeah, sure. So, we have been back on campus for a little while and it was not at full capacity, and to prepare for the lower capacity, and to encourage previous social distancing, we had removed a lot of furniture from the libraries. Well, now that we are going to be at 100 percent capacity on campus, we've brought that furniture back in. So hopefully our facilities will feel inviting and alive and thriving. The Delivery Services group brought in e-lockers, which someone may have mentioned before. It's great service. They're going to be in Diefendorf and outside of Lockwood, so that's a great service for our students. After library hours or any time. And we have some new lighting projects that are happening in Lockwood to help with some areas that have previously been a little too dark that we got some student feedback on. And so that should be fixed soon, hopefully before classes, if not in the early part of September. And in an effort to make our libraries feel safe in the current environment that we're in, we have hired some Compliance Assistants and those are people who will monitor the Libraries to make sure that students are abiding by mask standards that we have. Also making sure that people aren't eating in the library. Unfortunately, that's something that with mask wearing is not, it doesn't go with eating in the Library. So, those assistants will be on site to make sure that everyone is following guidelines, but mainly to make this feel like a safe place to work and study. We do have some positives that have come out of this sort of lull on campus construction while it wasn't in the Libraries, but construction on campus actually has progressed really well with minimal disturbances that were going to slow the progression. And that was because of the shutdown and the decreased capacity. So those construction projects that are outside of the Library but butting the Libraries, in particular One World Cafe are on track, which is really an exciting thing for our facilities because it's going to draw traffic in different patterns and bring a new, eventually a new entrance to the Silverman Library. So a way to tie that One World Cafe project in with the Silverman Library over in Capen

Nicole Thomas

Yeah, that's going to look really good when it's all done, and I can't wait to see the progress once it's all finished and how everything is going to look together with, especially with, you know how Silverman is and how advanced is this space it is. And then the One World Cafe coming in and just in tandem is going to look very nice. So that's very exciting. Marnie, can you share your thoughts on returning to campus after being virtual or your thoughts in general about coming back to that capacity being in person?

Marnie Mancuso

I think that the pandemic was very chaotic, but also very quiet around here, and I think the majority of us work at a University because we like working at a University and a University means there is students and life. And I think that we really all need that extreme dose of energy that will come back with students being on campus full time at 100 percent capacity. I am very much looking forward to it. My daughter's actually going to be a freshman, so that's super exciting for me and I'm glad that she's getting the opportunity to visit campus her first year. So, that is super exciting. And like we already talked about One World Cafe; it's going to be great. I just think that students are now going to be a little more used to the culture. And I think that

we're not going to take for granted some things that maybe before we did. You know, like being able to be near each other and go to restaurants as long as we keep following the, you know, the masking guidelines, hopefully we'll have a really positive and exciting fall semester.

Nicole Thomas

Oh, that's wonderful. Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts.

Marnie Mancuso

Thank you.

Nicole Thomas

Next, we have Paul Whiting, Lockwood Library Evening Supervisor. Hi, Paul.

Paul Whiting

Hi, Nicole.

Nicole Thomas

Good. How are you?

Paul Whiting

Good, thanks.

Nicole Thomas

So, can you tell me what's new this year in Lockwood Library?

Paul Whiting

Sure. I think Sarah touched on a lot of the things as far as what we're doing, Delivery Services wise. You know, they apply to both Lockwood and Abbott Libraries. So, all those things are the same here. We're providing all those same services. Our hours are going to be the same as they were pre-COVID, so open till midnight and open early during the weekdays. And Marnie touched on a couple of things as well. So, Marnie and the Facilities staff did a good job of getting everything kind of put back as far as seating and all that and also getting a new seating because I think some of our individual study carrels were liking seats and stuff like that. And I think all those are now full with seating. So, I think that'll be good for everybody. They won't have to kind of go around and search for a study carrel that has a chair because they will all have chairs now and then also the lockers. So, we just got lockers in there, as Marnie said outside of Lockwood Library and Diefendorf on the South Campus. And we're kind of working on getting those up and running. It's there's been a few little bumps in the road as far as the software on the back end, and we're trying to sort all that stuff out so, you know, we'll get it working as quick as we can and be patient with us if you have any, any issues with the lockers. But I think that'll be a great service that we'll have up and running smoothly very soon. And the other thing and this isn't really something that's new, but I think it's something that people might not really know about is just Delivery+ in general. It's a great service. So, if you have, you know, readings assigned from a book or if there's a chapter of a book or a journal article that you're interested in, like you don't necessarily have to come to the library to get it, just put on a Delivery+ request. And will, you know, pull the materials, and scan it and send it to you as a PDF. So, it can be a great way for people to get material and not really have to come to the Library like we can come to you and provide that.

Nicole Thomas

Delivery + is an exceptional service, and it's a very quick turnaround time, which I'm sure many of us can appreciate.

Paul Whiting

We try to try to make it as quick as possible, so it's nice that it's noticed that it's quick and appreciate it, so.

Nicole Thomas

Yes, you all do work very hard on getting that instant. Thank you. And I have a question about the lockers. If somebody has questions about when the lockers will be up and running or how would they be able to access the lockers, who would they contact?

Paul Whiting

Were, they're actually, we will be doing like a soft roll out of them right now. So, we're kind of not advertising it greatly right now. So, people are able to select the lockers as a pickup location when they place their Delivery+ requests. And it's kind of just a soft rollout, so we can kind of iron out a few more of the kinks and stuff like that. But so they are currently available for students and faculty and staff to select as a pickup location for any of their requests. And I think once we have, you know, a little more practice in people submitting requests and getting used to the workflow and figuring out any kind of issues or possible kinks in it, it'll be more marketed and put out there that they're available as a pickup location. And if anybody has any issue getting materials out of the lockers or using them in general, just whether you're using the lockers outside of Lockwood or at Diefendorf on South Campus, if you just go to the Library circulation desk and you know, the students there can get one of us to be able to help or assist with any any issues with the lockers.

Nicole Thomas

Wonderful. Right, and Paul, would you like to share your thoughts on returning to campus after working virtually or seeing people come back to campus? What are your thoughts on that?

Paul Whiting

Yeah, I think just to echo what both Sarah and Marnie said, it'll just be really nice to have people back on campus. It's just, it's so weird being on North Campus and not they're not being people around. It's just, you know, it's kind of just a big cavern of empty buildings and it's just missed the energy and the life. And it'll be good to have, you know, everybody back and kind of in that kind of same full capacity and it's just it'll be really nice just to have, you know, students and people around and it's just it's really weird with, you know, nobody here. And I think Marnie mentioned it's not, you know, we want to work at a University because we want to help and to be there for students, and it's just weird when nobody is around. And so, yeah, I think we can all appreciate news and are looking forward to all that, you know, life and energy that that a full kind of attended campus can bring.

Nicole Thomas

I completely agree, and I completely agree with all of you that this is incredibly exciting, especially after being in homes and seeing our families and just like the-the four walls within our home and to be transitioning back to a lively campus again and seeing students faces and just that, that bustling everyday work life, it's-it's something I think a lot of the students are going to enjoy returning to or at least beginning and having that college experience that they kind of expect. So it's...thank you all for sharing your thoughts and share your news and giving your perspectives. It's all incredibly valuable, and I thank you so much.

Sarah Patton, Paul Whiting, and Marnie Mancuso

Thank you.

Nicole Thomas

I'd like to thank Sarah, Marnie, and Paul for taking the time to keep us up to date on what's happening in the Libraries this semester. Please join us for the next episode in our Return To Campus series, when two of our Librarians will tell us some of the exciting new presentations, classes and workshops planned for the fall semester.