

Søkestua – A Drop-in Counseling Service for Students and Staff

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Abstract

Introduction

In the autumn of 2017, the Medicine and Health Library at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) started a guidance service for nursing students. Here students could ask questions about literature searching, references and bibliographies and so on. The experience with this was good. Much less time was spent arranging meetings with each student, e-mail correspondence back and forth and booking meeting rooms.

Methods

Based on these experiences, the library decided in the autumn of 2018 to establish "Søkestua". Søkestua or "The Search Room" – is a permanent drop-in guidance service open to all students and also staff at NTNU and St. Olavs Hospital.

Søkestua is offered once a week, every Thursday from 14-15. It takes place at the library's seminar room which has a group table set-up. We are seven colleagues running Søkestua, 2 each week.

We market Søkestua at the library desk, on library courses, to teachers and faculty, with flyers, on social media, blogposts, websites and on information screens.

Results

Those who use Søkestua are mostly bachelor and further education students, but other user groups are represented as well. They need help with reference styles and tools, literature searching and so on. Attendance varies greatly according to, among other things, time of the academic year. Several students come just before submitting assignments and while they are doing home exams. Some have simple and specific questions, others more comprehensive. Students tell us they are highly satisfied with Søkestua.

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Discussion

Søkestua is a type of low-threshold service that does not cost much work for each library employee. You can work with other things if no one shows up on your shift. By sharing the responsibility for Søkestua, we have got a common arena for sharing and building knowledge. It seems to be an added value in being in a common room. The furnishing of the seminar-room, with group table set-up, also calls for more student-active learning. In contrast to individual tutoring where students may have higher expectations of "receiving answers", it is easier in the seminar room to be able to help students to find answers themselves and also to collaborate with each other.

Then there are both advantages and disadvantages of having a fixed time of the week. It is predictable, requires little planning and preparation and is easy to market, but at the same time it is difficult to attend for those who have a full schedule and internships.

From the autumn of 2020, we offer Søkestua in a digital guidance room in Zoom, due to the Covid – 19 situation. Here students and staff can get the same kind of help as in the seminar-room either via chat or video call. So far, the experience with Søkestua in Zoom had been good, although we miss the physical meetings with staff and students.

Keywords: Counseling Service, Digital Counseling

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