Making Room for Moms: Advocating for a Lactation Space in the Library

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Making Room for Moms: Advocating for a Lactation Space in the Library

Dr. Heidi Blackburn, STEM and Business Librarian
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Seeing the need

Women make up:
• 80% of the library workforce
• 56% of the student body in higher education
• 53% of the faculty, staff, and administration in public universities in the U.S.

Photo courtesy of University of Nebraska Communications 2018

https://www.bls.gov/cps/
https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372
Finding best practices

- Ask the moms to be! (Staff input)
- Read the literature – What are other institutions doing? What are industry leaders doing?
- Find an expert – UNO Gender and Sexuality Resource Center director was armed with best practices
- Learn from mistakes – feedback about other campus lactation spaces that didn’t quite work

Photo courtesy of University of Nebraska Communications 2018
Working with administration

• Budget crisis

• Cost savings vs efficiencies

• Who’s on first?

• Navigating political waters

https://vimeo.com/213149910
Building awareness of the problem

“I’m not the one who started the project. I’m just the loudest.” ~Heidi

- UNO Libraries begins to talk about needs, February 2017
- CCSW advocates with UNO’s Chancellor, June 2017
- Follow up, December 2017
- Follow up, March 2018
- Follow up, May 2018
- Plans arrive, Summer 2018
- Now taking bids, Fall 2018!
Current status
Current status
Current status
Current status
Lessons learned

• Advocating with administration
  • Always be ready to speak up
  • Have your two-minute ask ready

• “Women’s problems are everyone’s problems”
  • How do I explain that my cause is your cause?

• What is the long game?
  • Are you prepared to ask for a month? A year?
  • How is this serving your patrons in the end?
Lessons learned

• Practical amenities
  • Sink for cleaning supplies
  • Refrigerator (pros and cons)

• Lock on the door
  • We have an online booking system
  • Key will be checked out at the main service desk

• Signage
  • Lactation room or Mother’s room?
Lessons learned

• Complete individual privacy
  • Communal space for moms who want to the company of other mothers while pumping
• Ergonomically designed furniture
  • Nursing is different than pumping
• Furniture that is easily cleaned from spills
• Functional yet stylish ambiance
  • Invites mothers to decompress and recharge
  • Allows them to return to their work feeling energized, appreciated and productive
We are including:

- Changing table
- Chair, footrest, side table
- Baby wipes, paper towels, hand sanitizer, tissues
- New parent books, magazines
- Small children table and chairs
- Children books and games
- Additional seating for two more adults or Mom and child(ren)
- Help button to service desk
- Dimmable lighting
- Ceiling light/fan
- Noise reduction
- Art work
- Whiteboard for Moms to leave messages to each other
- Cork board to pin a picture of your baby up
- Mirror
- Natural light with frosted glass
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