

Evidence-Based Email 2023 Project Report

Summary

Project team members conducted a campus-wide student survey and two rounds of interviews to create an evidence-based Email Content Guide for Library communications.

Overview



Lauren Johnson (User Experience Librarian), Alena Manjuck (Outreach & Engagement Librarian) and Nanci DeLa Cruz Aguayo (Library Specialist) collected student feedback on library emails using online surveys and in-person interviews with the goal of creating an Email Content Guide for use by Library faculty and staff.

Prior to survey and interview creation, the team collected and reviewed all enabled email templates that were student-facing and sent from our Springshare or Alma platforms (46 templates in total). Seven templates were selected for testing based on their frequency of use or potential emotional impact. Tested templates covered the following communication types:

- Appointment scheduling (confirmation and cancellation notices)
- Study room reservation
- Item checkout notifications
- Account holds due to fines or fees

The survey ran from late March to late April and received 477 responses. The team brainstormed incentives and chose a “Study Snuggle Bundle” complete with a fuzzy blanket, portable charger, and succulent plant plushie, which proved to be a huge hit with students. As part of the survey, students were presented with one of the 7 email templates and asked to review its content, style, and how it displayed in a sample email Inbox. Questions included:

- Imagine you received the highlighted email in your inbox. Would you open it? Why or why not?
- How clear is this email to you?
- How useful is this email to you?
- How could we improve this email?

The first round of Tiny Café interviews was conducted in mid-April. Tiny Cafés are a UX research method that utilizes short, informal, walk-up interviews to gather feedback from users on a particular product or service. Our Tiny Café format consisted of a table with snacks and drinks set-up outside the Library. Students were invited to sit and chat with the project team about one of the email templates, using a set of scripted interview questions. Four email templates were chosen from the 7 templates used in the campus survey. The team took feedback from 5 students on each template, for a total of 20 interviews.

The team coded all survey and Tiny Café data over the Summer and analyzed for themes. These themes provided a guide for revising 4 templates, which were testing again in a Tiny Café setting in September 2023 (after template testing in Springshare and Alma proved the proposed revisions were possible).

Based on collected data and individual research in email best practices, the team drafted and revised an Email Content Guide, which was completed in December 2023.

A second phase of the project is planned for 2024 and will focus on revising all enabled library email templates in Springshare and Alma.

Highlights

- Creation of a Library Email Content Guide that utilizes web/email best practices and student feedback data from Tiny Cafes and survey.
- Student survey with a high response rate (477 total responses and approximately 68 responses for each surveyed email template) and 40 total responses to Tiny Café.
- Drafted and revised 4 prototype email templates.

Stakeholders

- Lauren Johnson – accountable, responsible
- Nanci DeLa Cruz Aguayo – responsible
- Alena Manjuck – responsible
- Kelly Lutz – consulted