Chapter 11

Beyond Therapy Dogs

Rethinking Animal Policies to Protect and Promote Student Wellness for All Library Users

Jacqueline Frank

Abstract

This chapter presents options for rethinking and communicating animal policies to protect and promote wellness for all library patrons and suggests considering a responsive approach to educating users about library policies in order to help protect the rights of people with service animals, while also promoting a welcoming environment that supports student success, health, and wellness. The chapter includes a case study of the successful therapy dog program at the Montana State University (MSU) Library and shares educational handouts outlining the definitions and distinctions between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals (also called emotional support animals, or ESAs). The case study examines unintended and correlated impacts of the program, including an increase in people bringing pets into the library, and how challenges such as underprepared employees and unclear policies and procedures were addressed at the MSU Library.

Introduction: Therapy Dogs in Libraries

Therapy animals, including therapy dogs, help relieve stress, lower anxiety, help with homesickness, and lower blood pressure, among other benefits.[1] Many college and

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university libraries across the nation and globe have implemented therapy dog programs to help students relieve stress, including the University of Connecticut, Montana State University, and the University of Warwick in the UK.[2] These programs have been very popular on college campuses, and evidence for their feasibility and success in academic libraries is well outlined in the literature.

And yet, when thinking about the benefits of therapy dog programs, libraries should also consider that there might be some correlated and unintended effects of opening up library doors to dogs that appear to be more like pets than service animals trained to perform a specific task. This can send a message to patrons that all dogs are welcome and can contribute to an increase in animals being brought into the library, as well as a general misunderstanding of the distinctions between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals, for both library employees and students alike. With a perceived increase in people bringing dogs into the library, it is increasingly important for libraries to have clear, updated policies about animals in the building. The intention behind these policies is to protect the rights of all users, educate patrons about our expectations, and maintain an environment that is welcoming to all.

It further complicates the issue that the differences between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals (also called emotional support animals, or ESAs) can be subtle, making it easy to misinterpret the distinctions. This can cause confusion among library employees tasked with enforcing policies regarding animals in the building. Misunderstanding the distinctions, along with an increase in people bringing in their pets or unregistered comfort animals into libraries, can have unintended and negative consequences for people with legally protected service animals and for people who are afraid of or allergic to dogs, among others.[3] Library employees may be unsure about how to address the issue or how to approach patrons who bring animals into the library. This can be especially stressful if employees do not recognize the distinctions or if library policies and procedures are not explicit and clearly communicated.

This chapter attempts to clarify the differences between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals by presenting definitions and shares informational handouts that employees can use when approaching people with dogs or other animals that do not appear to be service animals. These informational handouts will help employees enforce library policies to protect the wellness of all users and will also educate users and employees about library policies and the distinctions between types of animals in a way that remains welcoming. This chapter also offers suggestions for other libraries that are seeing an increased number of animals in the building, including considerations for updating library policies and procedures to protect the rights of users, educating employees on definitions and procedures, utilizing educational materials that include the definitions and library policies, employing friendly signage, and partnering with other groups on campus. Finally, a case study of a successful therapy dog program is presented, including assessment data quantifying the stress-reduction effect of visiting with therapy dogs, as well as the educational handout created by the MSU Library.

Background

The college experience is stressful, and research shows that students today suffer from increased stress and anxiety,[4] while over half of students suffer from depression to some degree.[5] According to Jalongo and McDevitt, "self-reported stress levels of college freshmen are at a 25-year high and their self-appraisals of emotional stability, resilience, and coping strategies are at an all-time low."[6] This is alarming, and cause for concern. Others report that elevated stress around finals times can lead to increased depression and tensions[7] and that half of students say the final exam period is the most stressful event academically and cramming for exams is common among students.[8]

Not only are students stressed from their academic workload, but they may also feel stressed by being away from home, which can be a stressful transition in and of itself. Students often leave pets behind at home when moving away to college,[9] and missing pets is a common theme that students mention when attending therapy dog programs on university and college campuses.[10]

Increased stress around finals time has been linked to negative academic and health outcomes for students, which shows that managing stress is an important factor for academic success.[11] Libraries are taking the increased stress and anxiety among student populations seriously by evolving "into multipurpose organizations that offer a full range of services to support student success."[12] Many have expanded their services and programs beyond academics and information literacy to focus on overall student success.[13] Library programs are also beginning to offer more engagement opportunities as a way to support students and the campus community by serving as a hub for social interaction and for learning and collaboration, and as a cultural center.[14] Offering programs that promote healthy ways of managing stress with positive coping methods is another way that libraries can support overall student success and wellness,[15] and therapy dog programs do just that. Therapy dog programs also support all at-risk student groups, from first-generation college students to international students and veterans, by offering an opportunity to engage in an event that requires no common language, background experience, culture, knowledge or skill, and by simply providing the opportunity for students to sit, pet a dog, and relax for a while together.

For those interested in starting a therapy dog program, there is plenty of information published in the literature such as the recommendations of Jalongo and McDevitt on what constitutes a successful program, best practices for proposing and implementing a new program, and the benefits of therapy dogs in libraries.[16]

Definitions and Legally Allowed Questions

To help address the misunderstanding of distinctions between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals, definitions for each are presented, as well as the two legally allowed questions employees can ask regarding service animals. These definitions are

also included on the educational handout shared in Appendix 11A to this chapter, which libraries can use to educate their employees.

Service Animals

US Department of Justice regulations implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) define service animals as dogs, and sometimes miniature horses, "that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities." They go on to further clarify that "service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. [Animals] whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA."[17]

Therapy Animals

Volunteer therapy animal teams "provide affection and comfort to members of the public, typically in facility settings such as hospitals, assisted living, and schools"[18] at predesignated times. These pets are registered with their handlers, "have a special aptitude for interacting with members of the public and enjoy doing so. Therapy animal handlers volunteer their time to visit with their animals in the community."[19] Therapy animals do not have any special rights of access, are not allowed in businesses with "no pets" policies, and are not allowed in airplane cabins.[20] Therefore, therapy animals are not allowed in campus buildings by default or because of their designation, and volunteer therapy animal teams visiting college campuses should be approved in advance for specific therapy dog programs or events.

Comfort Animals

Comfort animals, also called emotional support animals (ESAs), may "provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities" according to the Southwest ADA center.[21] In addition, "the pet must be prescribed by a licensed mental health professional for a person with a mental illness. The prescription must state that the individual has an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, and that the presence of the animal is necessary for the individual's mental health."[22] Although comfort animals or ESAs can be included in a medical treatment plan, they are pets, are not considered service animals under the ADA, and therefore have no special rights of access.[23] As such, they "may only accompany their owners in public areas with the express permission of each individual venue and/or facility management."[24]

The only added protections that comfort animals have over pets (when officially prescribed as ESAs, are that they "may travel with their owners on airplanes with documentation as required by the airline" and they "may live with their owners in locations covered by the Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA) regardless of a 'no pets' policy,"[25] which often includes campus housing at colleges and universities. Some institutions,

including Montana State University, also have academic exceptions for comfort animals allowing them in academic buildings, although these animals are individually approved and provided documentation designating the animal as an assistance animal with the same protections on campus as a service animal. Housing accommodations do not automatically give the individual an academic exception, nor does an academic exception give the animal additional rights of access off campus.

Legally Allowed Questions Regarding Service Animals

When determining if animals are service animals or not, library employees may ask only two questions:

- Is this a service dog required because of a disability?
- What work or task has it been trained to perform?[26]

If the person replies that the animal "is trained to provide comfort" or "to help me relax" or "stay calm," it is not protected as a service animal and rather considered a comfort animal or emotional support animal, unless it has been individually approved with documentation by the college or university.

Employees may not ask about the extent or nature of a person's disability, nor may they ask to see any documentation for service animals.[27] Employees should also not question a patron when their dog is clearly a service animal (e.g., the animal is guiding a person who is blind or pulling a wheelchair) to avoid questioning people with service animals repeatedly about the status of their animal. . Rather, employees should question users only when there is an indication that their dog is not a service animal (e.g., the animal is aggressive toward others or not under the control of their handler).[28]

An Increase in Unapproved Animals

Considering the differences between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals presented here, it is understandable that users might be unaware of or confused regarding the distinctions. In addition, users might not be aware of library policies regarding the different types of animals, or they might not think they are doing any harm by bringing their pet into the library if they have seen other animals in the building. All of these potential reasons, among others, could be contributing to the perceived increase in unapproved animals being brought into libraries.[29]

It should also be considered that even though there are many benefits to implementing therapy dog programs in libraries as discussed in this chapter, there can also be unintended and correlated consequences of opening up library doors to dogs that appear to be more like pets than service animals. At the MSU Library, one of these consequences has been more users bringing in pets and unapproved comfort animals despite the fact that it goes against posted policy. Based on feedback from public service employees, there is a general misunderstanding among MSU Library patrons and employees alike of the distinctions between service animals, therapy animals, comfort animals, and personal pets, which is likely a contributing factor. This confusion can also worsen the problem as it may result

in employees hesitating to act when people bring their pets into the library. This can send the incorrect message that all animals are welcome, further increasing the number of unapproved animals as well as the potential negative impacts on other users. Therefore, inconsistent responses by employees can unintentionally exacerbate the issue, as well as negatively affecting people with legally protected service animals or people who might be afraid of or allergic to dogs, among others.[30]

The MSU Library cannot definitively claim that this increase in unapproved animals is due to the success of our therapy dog program Paws to de-Stress; however, programs like this may cause people to think of libraries as dog- and pet-friendly places. The increase in pets and unapproved comfort animals could also be influenced by factors such as a trending focus on holistic personal wellness and the benefits dogs can offer, the Air Carrier Access Act that allows comfort animals in addition to service animals in the cabin of airplanes,[31] or people who simply want to push the boundaries and bring their pets with them regardless of policy.

An argument could be made that that the general trends we are seeing in larger society—such as consumer demand for pet-friendly businesses such as Nordstrom, hardware stores, restaurants, and so on and the increase in people bringing their pets with them into public places—are having unforeseen and unintended impacts on libraries.[32] In addition, it's likely that libraries are also seeing local impacts of another growing trend nationwide, in which self-care topics such as mindfulness, stress relief, and the benefits of comfort animals are gaining popularity and attention. These factors could also be contributing to students feeling more entitled to bring into the library animals that help them individually, simply without being aware of or thinking about the impacts on other users.

Negative Impacts for People with Disabilities

An increase in people bringing pets into the library (including comfort animals that have not been officially designated as assistance animals on campus) has a negative impact on people with disabilities and other library users as well. From the perspective of Melissa Mitchell, creator of the website *Service Dogs: A Way of Life* and a woman with a disability, although "many people think they are doing no harm by allowing others to believe their pet is a service dog,"[33] that is not actually the case. Mitchell explains that bringing non–service animals into public places, including libraries, confuses others as to the purpose of a true service animal. As summarized by Rust and Wise, "by representing pets as service dogs, owners are trivializing the disabilities of actual service dog handlers. Handlers and their dogs are in danger of attacks from poorly behaved pets in public, and service dogs acquire negative reputations because of the bad behavior of other dogs. Employees in public places are less willing to accept any dogs and service dog handlers are questioned more often as a result of these misrepresentations."[34] Pets are also not held to the same grooming standards as service animals, and therefore have a higher risk of spreading fleas or diseases to legitimate service animals, for example, thereby making service animals less

able to perform their work.[35] This can also negatively impact people with severe allergies or other health problems.

Animal Policies, Procedures, and Educational Strategies for Academic Libraries

Given the general misconceptions already discussed, and in order to protect the rights of people with legal service animals as well as other users, libraries need to have clear policies regarding animals in the building, and they need to educate their employees on consistent procedures to enforce those policies. This chapter suggests that libraries should consider taking a responsive approach to educating users about their animal policies in order to help protect the rights of people with service animals, while also promoting a welcoming environment that supports student success and protects the health and wellness of all users. Other libraries might consider options that benefited the MSU Library, such as simplifying and updating policies and procedures, educating employees on definitions and refreshing knowledge of procedures, creating educational materials with distinctions for patrons and employees, utilizing friendly signage, and tapping into the expertise of other groups on campus.

Updating Animal Policies and Procedures to Ensure Protection for Patrons

Libraries need policies and procedures that protect patrons with service animals and ensure that the blurred lines between service animals, comfort animals, and therapy animals don't have unintended consequences for those with legitimate needs and legal protection. In addition, libraries should strive to create a welcoming space for all patrons, including patrons who are allergic to dogs, have phobias, or come from a culture where dog-human interactions are different. If patrons continue bringing in pets that are disruptive, this can hinder the experience for other users or make the space unwelcoming, and the reputation of service animals can be negatively affected by the bad behavior of other dogs, among other negative impacts as discussed earlier.[36]

The responsive and educational approach to enforcing library policies can include actions such as updating procedures for employees to address unidentified or disruptive animals in the library by presenting users with educational materials outlining definitions and policies about who is welcome and why in order to communicate expectations to users so they are more aware when they visit the library the next time. This can also help communicate the unintended impacts that bringing pets into the library can have on other users, which many people might not realize or think about. This approach to enforcing policies may also include limiting the instances when employees address unidentified animals to those that occur after a disruption, complaint, or observing animal behaviors

that are not consistent with those of service animals. This will lessen the chance of employees repeatedly questioning people with legal, well-behaved service animals.

Educating Employees

The distinctions between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals are easy to misinterpret or forget, and many library employees are not fully aware or educated on these nuanced distinctions. Yet they are expected to enforce library policies that often allow only service animals. Therefore, libraries should support their employees by providing training or learning opportunities on the definitions of and differences between these types of animals, as well as on procedures that they can use to enforce library policy, including the two legally allowed questions regarding service animals. This training could take the form of offering presentations by knowledgeable personnel, providing readings or materials for self-guided learning, and utilizing the shared informational handouts presented in this chapter for employee reference as well as educating users. Additionally, it's important for employees to be aware of library policies and how they are expected to enforce those policies. Whether rethinking enforcement as described in the previous section or taking another approach, robust learning opportunities and regular refreshers on both policies and procedures should be provided for library employees.

Utilizing Educational Handouts

Because many library employees are either not fully aware of, educated on, or trained on the differences between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals, and because those distinctions are often hard to remember in the moment of interaction with a user, it can be understandably stressful for employees to enforce policies about animals in the library. In order to educate employees about the distinctions and lessen the chance of stressful interactions, it can be useful to utilize an educational handout that can be given to patrons and includes definitions for employees to reference.

An example of an educational handout created by the MSU Library is included in Appendix 11A to this chapter. A reusable and editable version of the MSU Library's educational handout can be downloaded (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gXrWdCKcGYAi-5hK88Iy6UZJPRGvqk9FO/view?usp=sharing) should other libraries wish to utilize or adapt it.

Offering Friendly Signage

Whatever policies and procedures are in place, users need to be aware of those policies in order to respect and follow them. Utilizing friendly signage is important for communicating policies to users and for providing a public notification for employees to refer back to during patron interactions. Some considerations for effective library signage are to use positive phrasing rather than prohibitive phrasing (e.g., service animals welcome vs. no pets allowed), include images, be as brief as possible, strongly highlight the most important point, emphasize important text in more than one way (e.g., bold text in addition to a different font size and color), and brand signage with your library logo. Although

having the best signage will not ensure that all users will take notice or read the posted information, it is still highly beneficial to have clear signage posted in visible, accessible locations. Posting signage near all public entrances is recommended as it will help library employees enforce policies by offering a public notification for them to refer back to. Doing this makes users aware of policies for the next time and reminds them of their responsibility to respect those policies for the benefit of all users.

An example of signage posted near all entrances at the MSU Library is included in the case study that follows. The signage was recreated based on a design presented in an article by Rust and Wise.[37] Like the handout, a reusable and editable version of the MSU Library's public signage can be downloaded as well (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ccJ375aIh8rzT8NcLaMaoowMHC_teSwo/view?usp=sharing).

Finding Expertise Elsewhere on Campus

Finally, libraries might consider connecting with groups on campus to further understand campus policies or request training for employees. For example, libraries could consult experts in the office of disabilities to find out more about the students who have been granted academic exceptions for comfort animals so that the rights of those individuals can be protected. Finding others on campus who have experience in this area to provide advice, assistance, training, and to help increase knowledge around service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals will be beneficial.

Case Study: Therapy Dog Program Assessment at the Montana State University Library

Paws to de-Stress at the MSU Library

As discussed previously, the MSU Library has learned a lot since the beginning of our Paws to de-Stress therapy dog program in 2013. Initially, our library wanted to address the concern of stress and its health impacts on students after recognizing that student stress levels were high, especially during the period of final exams, and that we are part of a larger national trend. The library proposed and implemented the pilot program for Paws to de-Stress during final exams in the spring of 2013. The program was so successful that it became a regular event held each semester since then. It would be one of the first academic library therapy dog programs, following the example of a similar program at Emory University.[38]

Paws to de-Stress brings in therapy dogs during the last two weeks of each semester during final exams, for two hours each day at various times. The MSU Library partners with a local volunteer organization, Intermountain Therapy Animals (ITA), scheduling volunteers to bring their registered therapy dogs during the advertised event times each day, with students simply dropping by and staying as long as they want. No sign-up

process is required, and the event is free and open to the public in addition to students. The event takes place in a designated area on the first floor of the library that is removed from all service points and collections, therefore allowing people who have allergies, who are afraid of dogs, or who simply want to avoid interaction with the dogs to do so if they wish. Signage is also posted before the event and during the scheduled visiting times to inform patrons of the presence of dogs.

If you are lucky enough to have such an organization near your community, partnering with a volunteer therapy animal group as the MSU Library does offers many benefits. For example, therapy dogs registered through ITA are covered by liability insurance, and only well-trained dogs who demonstrate good temperament and reliable, predictable behavior are allowed. The rules for registered therapy dog teams require that all dogs be kept on leashes at all times and clearly identified as therapy dogs, and that handlers be present at all times. Paws to de-Stress is promoted to the campus community with signage in the library, on the library website, in the campus calendar of events, in the student newspaper, and on social media, although word of mouth remains the most effective mode of getting the word out.[39]

Assessment of Paws to de-Stress

To assess the effectiveness of the program, MSU Library uses a multipronged approach, including an optional short participant survey, hourly visitor count, flip chart comments from participants, and solicitation of comments from ITA volunteers about their interactions and observations. These methods show overwhelmingly positive feedback about the event and the helpful effects that therapy dog interactions have on students, and yet they tell us only so much. For this reason, the MSU Library set out to be among the first to attempt to quantify self-reported stress levels before and after interacting with therapy dogs in a pilot assessment study during the fall of 2016.[40] Attendees were asked to self-rate their stress level on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with accompanying emoji-like faces. Students marked their stress level using stickers on a flip chart when entering and again on a different flip chart with the same scale when leaving. Five represented being stressed to the max, and 1 represented being not stressed at all. The pilot study then compared the average stress levels of all students entering with the average of all students leaving to find the average stress-reduction effect.

During the pilot study, 1,141 students attended Paws to de-Stress over the course of two weeks. In that time, 514 students self-rated their stress levels entering at an average of 2.91 out of 5 (figure 11.1). Out of those 514 students, 368 also self-rated their stress levels as they left at an average of 1.35 out of 5 (figure 11.2). Students who opted in to rate their stress levels were given a pair of stickers when entering, asked to place one sticker as they entered, and then keep their second sticker to rate when leaving. Only students who still had their second sticker could rate their stress level when leaving, thereby ensuring that students who rated their stress when leaving had also rated their stress when entering.

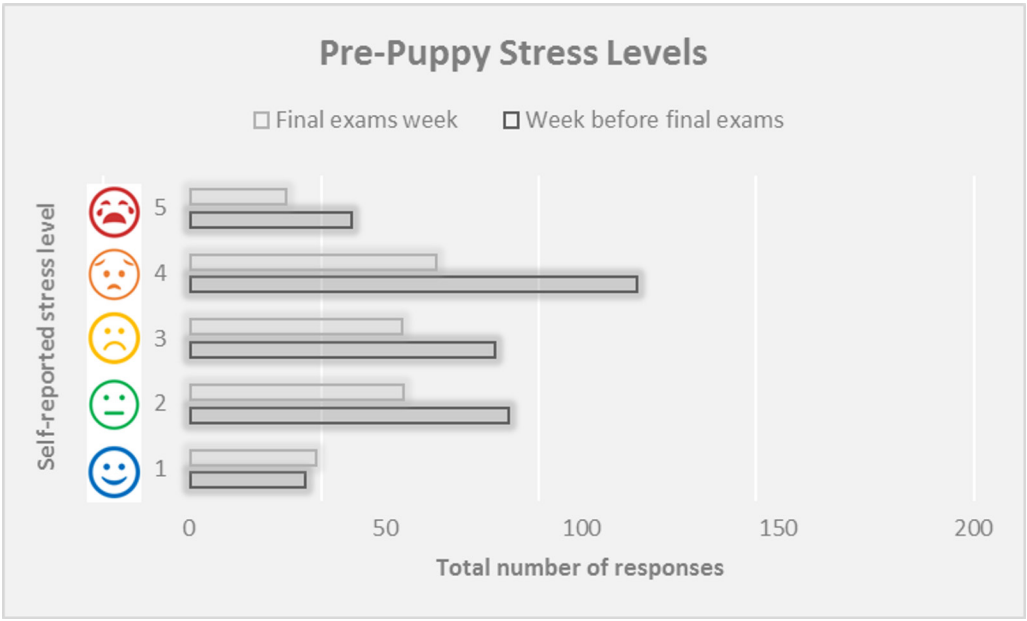


Figure 11.1
Self-reported stress levels before therapy dogs at the MSU Library in fall 2016

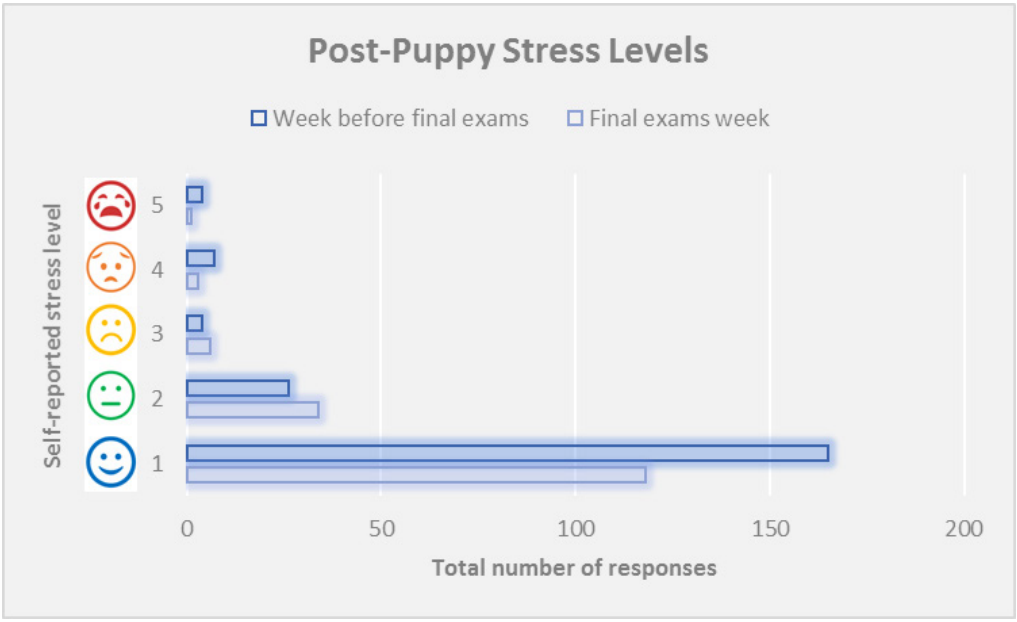


Figure 11.2
Self-reported stress levels after therapy dogs at the MSU Library in fall 2016

The results equate to an average stress-reduction change (self-reported) of 1.55 points out of 5, and an average of 53 percent stress reduction when compared with the average stress level at entrance, with a *p*-value of < 2.2*e*–16 and a 99 percent confidence interval. The time each student spent interacting with the therapy dogs was not tracked. This is an immense reduction in self-reported stress levels among students visiting with therapy dogs and gives concrete evidence showing the effectiveness of therapy dog programs implemented in libraries to help ease student stress.

In addition to this quantitative data, the valuable benefits of the program are further demonstrated by student comments, survey data, and the popularity of the program, which consistently attracts over 1,000+ students each semester. For example, according to one semester's worth of survey data, 96 percent of respondents answered yes to the question "Will visiting with therapy dogs help to improve the outcomes of studying and/or exams?" and 99 percent answered yes to the question "Did therapy dogs reduce your stress level?"[41]

Addressing Unforeseen Challenges with Education at the MSU Library

In the years since the start of Paws to de-Stress in 2013, the MSU Library has also seen an increase in non–service animals and pets being brought into our building. To address the challenges created by this increase, the MSU Library used the educational approach recommended earlier in the chapter. The library first updated employee procedures for enforcing policies, then clarified and added new signage and created handouts with information and definitions that employees could bring with them and reference in patron interactions, as well as hand out to patrons for their own information. The library also outlined and documented the new procedures for employees to use in responding to unmarked animals in the building, which includes the questions they are legally allowed to ask. These changes were initiated after hearing from employees that they were regularly having to approach patrons with unidentified dogs to ask if they were service animals. There was also concern about the impact on our patrons with legal service animals, as well as with inconsistent enforcement of policies.

Prior procedure called for student employees at the front desk to notify their staff supervisor when they saw animals entering the building that were not clearly identified as service animals (i.e., wearing a vest) and for the supervisor to approach the patron as quickly as possible to ask if they had a service animal that was required because of a disability. This was stressful for employees because they had to remember the specific questions they could legally ask and because they had to tactfully tell patrons with non–service animals to leave. To help address this stress, an educational handout was created to support these interactions.

Creating an educational handout also offered a valuable opportunity to update and educate our employees and users about the different types of animals. The handout has the title "Can My Dog Be Here?" and is given to users to help them understand the distinctions, to provide references for the definitions, and hopefully to help them better understand our policies. On the front of the handout, there is a Quick Answers section

that outlines the basics of the policy: service animals are always welcome, comfort animals must be approved by MSU Disability Services and issued a blue card (which designates the animal as an official assistance animal on campus with equal rights to a service animal), therapy dogs must be approved but are only allowed for events, and pets are not allowed. Also, on the front side are the sections What You Can Expect from Us and What We Expect from You that further outline staff procedures and guidelines for animal behavior. The longer definitions and distinctions between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals are included on the back of the handout, along with references and a section that explains the basis for library policies and shows how they mirror campus policies.

To help reduce the impact on patrons with legal service animals, the MSU Library also switched to a responsive approach, addressing users with animals only if their animal is not behaving as a service animal or after a complaint or disruption has occurred (e.g., an animal that is noisy, aggressive, sick, or uncontrolled). Though student employees at the front desk are still instructed to notify their supervisor of all animals entering the building, supervisors will not approach unidentified animals by default, but they will stay alert to any potential disruptions. If animals are behaving like service animals and remain leashed and on the floor, our employees are no longer required to approach the user, although they may always choose to ask if it is a service animal in order to help protect the well-being of other users. This response both limits repeated interactions that some people with legal service animals have to endure and ensures that all disruptive, uncontrolled, or unhygienic pets are removed in a timely manner. If a disruption occurs, supervisors address the issue and provide the educational handout created to support these interactions.

Next, the MSU Library updated and clarified our signage near all public entrances, which was recreated based on a design presented in an article by Rust and Wise (figure 11.3).[42] Previous signage was mostly text, not written in a particularly friendly way, and generally blended into the busy front-entrance scene of our library. Intentional changes in the new signage included more visuals, larger text to highlight our main point that service animals are welcome, and friendlier language that specifically lets users know that pets, therapy, and comfort animals are not permitted. The new signage further explains that service animals must be leashed or harnessed and must remain on the floor. Finally, the updated signage includes a brief definition of service animals that is used by the ADA: "A service animal is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability."

These changes to our procedures, as well as the educational materials and updated signage, helped the MSU Library reduce employee stress and anxiety over approaching users with animals in the building, while still consistently enforcing library policies. Other libraries are encouraged to take a similar approach, implementing a responsive approach to enforcing policies and educating users about the different types of animals and when they are allowed in the library, if at all. In addition, other institutions are encouraged to reuse and adapt the materials shared by the MSU Library to support a welcoming environment for all users.



Figure 11.3
Service animal signage at the MSU Library

Conclusion

Therapy dog programs in academic libraries promote student success and wellness; however, bringing in therapy dogs can have the unintended consequence of making the library seem like a pet-friendly space and contributing to a misunderstanding regarding policy on different types of companion animals. To alleviate these consequences, libraries first need policies that protect both the rights of people with service animals and the health and well-being of other users and employees. Next, employees who enforce library policies need to be supported with training and education on the distinctions between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals, as well as the procedures and expectations for enforcing library policies. Taking an educational approach and utilizing informational handouts outlining definitions and policies about what types of animals are welcome and why can help inform both library employees and users, as well as help communicate the unintended impacts that bringing pets into the library can have on other users. The considerations presented in this chapter can help libraries maintain a healthy, inclusive space that promotes student success and wellness for all users.

Appendix 11A

Can My Dog Be Here?



Quick Answers

Pets = Not Allowed in Any Campus Building

Comfort Animals or **Emotional Support Animals = Allowed with Blue Card***
**Must be Officially Approved by MSU Disabilities Services*
Therapy Animals with Handlers = Approved for Specific Events Only

Service Animals or **Assistance Animals = Allowed** in All Campus Buildings

What You Can Expect From Us

- We **support our community** by creating, providing, and maintaining a safe, pleasant, and welcoming environment for *all patrons*.
- We courteously and **proactivity address any concerns, disruptions**, or interactions that are brought to our attention related to animals in the building.
- We may also **ask if you have a Blue Card issued by MSU Disabilities Services**. The card is officially approved and provided to you by their office and names your animal an "assistance animal" as an academic accommodation.
- If your animal is not allowed in the building, we will ask you to leave.
- If we interact with you repeatedly, we will inform University Police.

Disruptions include unruly or disruptive behavior, e.g., **barking, urination, or not under owner's control.**

If the animal displays any disruptive behavior, regardless of category/definition, you will be asked to leave the building.

What We Expect From You

- You will ensure that your animal is allowed in the building according to campus policies and applicable definitions (*see* reverse side of this handout).
- If allowed, you will ensure **your animal is leashed or harnessed and remains on the floor** at all times. Animals may not be carried and may not sit or stand on any furniture.
- You will cooperate with and treat us with courtesy if we directly address any concerns or interactions that are brought to our attention; you will let us know **if you have a Blue Card issued by MSU Disabilities Services** if asked and applicable.
- You will help us and your fellow library patrons as we work to provide a safe and pleasant environment for all patrons. If asked to leave, you will comply in a timely manner.

Service Animal Educational Handout, page 1

Details & Definitions[1, 2]

Service Animals (also called Assistance Animals[2])

- **Dogs individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability[1].** Service animals are working animals, not pets. The task or work they've been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability[2].
- Animals with the sole function of providing **comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals** under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)[1].






Therapy Animals[2]

- **Volunteer therapy animal teams provide affection and comfort to members of the public, typically in facility settings such as hospitals, assisted living, and schools, at pre-designated times[2].** These pets are registered with their handlers, have a special aptitude for interacting with members of the public, and enjoy doing so. Therapy animal handlers volunteer their time to visit with their animals in the community[2].
- Therapy animals **have no special rights of access**, may not enter businesses with "no pets" policies, or accompany their handler in the cabin of an airplane regardless of their therapy animal designation[2].
- Therapy animals must be approved in campus buildings for specific events such as Paws to de-Stress, case-by-case.

Comfort Animals (also called Emotional Support Animals[1])

- **Animals that provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities[1].** The pet must be prescribed by a licensed mental health professional for a person with a mental illness. The prescription must state that the individual has an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, and that the presence of the animal is necessary for the individual's mental health[2].
- While emotional support animals or comfort animals are often used as part of a medical treatment plan, they are pets and are **not considered service animals under the ADA[1]** and **have no special rights of access.** As such, they may only accompany their owners in public areas with the express permission of each individual venue and/or facility management, although they may travel with their owners on airplanes with documentation as required by the airline[2].
- A comfort animal **must be approved by MSU Office of Disabilities to be in the library and you will be issued a Blue Card.**

1. https://adata.org/publication/service-animals-booklet
2. https://petpartners.org/learn/terminology/

Our Policies Are Campus Policies

- MSU Campus Policy: http://www.montana.edu/police/animals-on-campus.html
- Campus policy draws from the ADA definitions of service animals and uses MSU's Office of Disabilities assistance animal policy: http://www.montana.edu/aycss/disability/guidelines/assistive_animal.html
- See also ADA Requirements for Service Animals from ADA.gov: https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm
- Questions or comments? Let us know: http://www.lib.montana.edu/contact/index.html

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Notes

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