Academic Library Services and Programming for Student Veterans

Sarah LeMire
First Year Experience and Outreach Librarian
Texas A&M University Libraries
About the Presenter

Then:
US Army Sergeant

Now:
Librarian at Texas A&M

- Experience working with student veterans as a librarian at the University of Utah and at Texas A&M University in College Station
- Presented the paper “Beyond Service: New Outreach Strategies to Reach Student Veterans” at ACRL 2015
Other webinars in the series

- Previous webinars in the Providing Library Services for Military & Veteran Communities in Texas
  - Part 1: The National Landscape and Military/Veteran Cultural Competency (Kristen Mulvihill)
  - Part 2: The Texas Landscape (Aaron Smith, Perry Jefferies, Dina Abramson)
  - Part 3: Public Library Services and Programming (Patricia Altamirano, Veronica Anderson, Judy Bergeron, Pattie Mayfield)
What will we be covering?

1. Who are veterans?
2. Veterans in higher education
3. What makes student veterans different?
4. How are colleges and universities serving student veterans?
5. What can libraries do to support student veterans?
6. How can libraries support marginalized populations within the veteran community?
Who are veterans?

- ARMY (Main, 2011)
- NAVY (Medellin, 2011)
- AIR FORCE (Bruch, 2012)
- MARINES (Jasik, 2013)
- NATIONAL GUARD (Lipp, 2011)
- COAST GUARD (Hill, 2012)
Who are veterans?

- Not a single unified definition of what a veteran is

Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Active military service means full-time service, other than active duty for training, as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service, Environmental Science Services Administration or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or its predecessor, the Coast and Geodetic Survey. - Veterans Benefits Administration

Any student, alumni, faculty, or staff member of the University of Utah who has been or currently is a military member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard (active or reserve), or National Guard of any state; or has separated from these services with a discharge other than Dishonorable is considered to be a Veteran by the Veterans Support Center. Any ROTC cadet in their 3rd or 4th year and any spouse or children of Veterans under this definition may also seek support from the Veterans Support Center. – University of Utah Veterans Support Center
Who are veterans?

A veteran is an individual who served or is serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, on active duty or in the National Guard or Reserves, for any period of time, regardless of combat service, deployment, or type of discharge.
Veterans and Higher Education

- Veterans make up approximately 5% of undergraduate college students (Military Connected Student Report)

- In 2014, over 1 million students were using VA education benefits. (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015)
  - Over 93,000 of these students are attending schools in Texas (second only to California)

- In 2013, over 275,000 active duty service members received DoD Tuition Assistance benefits (United States Government Accountability Office, 2014)

- In 2014, almost 39,000 students received Hazlewood Exemption Awards (State of Texas Legislative Budget Board, 2014)

- A significant percentage of student veterans are not receiving VA or DoD educational benefits

- Almost 40% of Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits & 50% of DoD Tuition Assistance benefits go to for-profit colleges (Harkin, 2014)
What makes student veterans different?
What makes student veterans different?

Student veterans are different than their civilian counterparts in a number of ways.

According to a 2013 American Council on Education report based on 2012 National Survey of Student Engagement data:

- ~80% of student veterans are over age 25
- ~75% of student veterans are male
- ~60% of student veterans are first-generation students
- Student veterans are more racially diverse than their civilian counterparts

(Kim & Cole, 2013)
What makes student veterans different?

Student veterans also exhibit different behaviors than their civilian counterparts.

• Student veterans are:
  - More likely to live off-campus
  - More likely to work off-campus
  - More likely to be caring for dependents
  - Less likely to work on-campus
  - Less likely to participate in extracurricular activities

• Student veterans are:
  - More likely to spend time preparing for class
  - More likely to discuss grades and/or assignments with their instructors
  - More likely to have a positive relationship with faculty members

(Kim & Cole, 2013)

(Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System, 2011) (Texas A&M University Libraries, 2015a)
How are colleges and universities serving student veterans?

• Many colleges and institutions have services specifically for veteran students.
  
• The Basics:
  • School Certifying Official
  
• Other Common Services:
  • Education benefits counseling
  • Credit for military training
  • Financial assistance or discounts for veterans
  • Campus social and/or cultural events
  
• The Next Level:
  • Veteran service offices
  • Student veteran organizations
  • Staff and faculty training about veterans
  • Veteran-oriented or veteran-specific courses
  • Priority enrollment
  • Vet Success on Campus (VSOC) counselors

(McBain et.al, 2012)
What can libraries do to support student veterans?

- Although many campuses have been developing specific services for veterans, not many libraries have followed.
- Libraries can play an important role in academic services for veterans:
  - Academic libraries often fill the crucial third space role on campus, but this can present challenges for veterans
  - Veterans can exhibit unique information-seeking behavior
What can libraries do to support student veterans?

- Case Study: Austin Community College District
  - Activities:
    - Sheila Ross Henderson – designated representative responsible for recommending collection additions for veterans, identifying veteran-related activities, and serving on college’s Veterans Advisory Committee
    - Highlighting veteran-related holidays on library homepage “What’s New” feature
    - Poster in library featuring veterans
    - Collaborating with campus Veterans Resource Center
    - Attending and/or providing resource table on-campus and off-campus veterans events
    - LibGuide for veterans: [http://researchguides.austincc.edu/Veterans](http://researchguides.austincc.edu/Veterans)

(Henderson, S., personal communication, November 3, 2015)
What can libraries do to support student veterans?

- Case Study: West Texas A&M University – Cornette Library
  - Activities:
    - Shawna Kennedy-Witthar, Director of Information and Library Resources serves as cosponsor of campus chapter of Student Veterans of America (SVA)
    - Friends of the Library sponsor a monthly lunch for SVA members
    - Friends of the Library sponsored a table at the WTAMU Military Veterans Ball; Cornette Library Circulation Desk sold tickets
    - Veterans and Library partnered on “Books 'N Boots” team for Relay 4 Life
  - Outcomes:
    - SVA chapter meetings well-attended; 44 members in attendance at first Fall 2015 meeting
    - Student veterans are comfortable in the library, and SVA leaders even hang out in the Director’s office

(Kennedy-Witthar, S., personal Communication, October 20, 2015)
What can libraries do to support student veterans?

• Case Study: Texas A&M University Libraries
  • Activities:
    • Librarian business cards in campus veterans office
    • Librarian involvement in Aggie Vet Network
    • Library resource table at VetCamp and Boots to Backpacks events each semester
    • Librarian involvement with campus Troops2College committee
    • Librarian participation in campus group of scholars researching issues related to veterans
    • Librarian partnership with campus veterans office and community organizations to develop a series of women veteran-themed events scheduled for March 2016 (stay tuned!)

Outcomes:
  • Beginning to receive referrals from student veterans who need library support
  • Developing representation as campus individual and entity interested in veterans’ issues
What can libraries do to support student veterans?

- **Common Outreach Starters:**
  - LibGuide for Veterans (e.g. USC Library)
  - Provide instruction in veteran-specific or veteran-targeted courses
  - Displays of veteran-related or veteran-oriented library material
  - Office hours in campus veterans center

- **The Next Level:**
  - Develop veteran-specific programs, events, or initiatives
  - Move outside the library, physically or virtually, to provide support to veterans
  - Build relationships with campus and community veteran organizations
What can libraries do to support student veterans?

Campus and Community Veterans’ Organizations:
- **Campus**
  - Campus veterans’ office
  - Campus chapter of Student Veterans of America
  - Other campus committees, student organizations interested in military issues
- **State**
  - State Veterans Affairs Office
    - Texas Veterans Commission
- **Federal**
  - US Department of Veterans Affairs
    - Regional Offices, Vet Centers, VA Hospitals
- **Veterans Service Organizations (e.g. VFW, American Legion)**
  - [http://www.va.gov/vso/](http://www.va.gov/vso/)
Women Veterans

- Women veterans are more likely than male veterans to enroll in college. (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2013)
- Women veterans “are equally likely to have had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences while serving (47% vs. 42% of men), and their transition back into civilian life has been equally tough. More than four-in-ten female post-9/11 veterans (43%) say their readjustment to civilian life after their military service was very or somewhat difficult (along with 45% of men).” (Patten & Parker, 2011)

Potential Partners:

- Campus Women’s Resource Center
- VA Center for Women Veterans
- Texas Veterans Commission Women’s Program
- Veterans Service Organizations (many large organizations have targeted outreach to women veterans, and there are also organizations just for women)

Women Veterans

- Women veterans are more likely than male veterans to enroll in college. (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2013)
- Women veterans “are equally likely to have had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences while serving (47% vs. 42% of men), and their transition back into civilian life has been equally tough. More than four-in-ten female post-9/11 veterans (43%) say their readjustment to civilian life after their military service was very or somewhat difficult (along with 45% of men).” (Patten & Parker, 2011)

Potential Partners:

- Campus Women’s Resource Center
- VA Center for Women Veterans
- Texas Veterans Commission Women’s Program
- Veterans Service Organizations (many large organizations have targeted outreach to women veterans, and there are also organizations just for women)

Women Veterans

- Women veterans are more likely than male veterans to enroll in college. (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2013)
- Women veterans “are equally likely to have had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences while serving (47% vs. 42% of men), and their transition back into civilian life has been equally tough. More than four-in-ten female post-9/11 veterans (43%) say their readjustment to civilian life after their military service was very or somewhat difficult (along with 45% of men).” (Patten & Parker, 2011)

Potential Partners:

- Campus Women’s Resource Center
- VA Center for Women Veterans
- Texas Veterans Commission Women’s Program
- Veterans Service Organizations (many large organizations have targeted outreach to women veterans, and there are also organizations just for women)
How can libraries support marginalized populations within the veteran community?

- LGBT Veterans
  - Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell repealed in 2010
    - Originally passed in 1993 as a compromise for lifting existing ban on gay and bisexual individuals serving in the military
    - Over 13,000 men and women were discharged under DADT (Gates, 2010)
  - Transgender individuals are still technically barred from service
    - Transgender veterans are entitled to medically necessary care through the VA (VHA Directive 2013-003) and are beginning to take advantage of this care (Kauth, M.R. et. al, 2014)
  - LGBT veterans experience barriers to care through the VA (Johnson & Federman, 2013)

- Potential Partners:
  - Campus LGBT Resource Center
  - VA LGBT Program
  - Veterans Service Organizations – e.g. American Veterans for Equal Rights

We Serve All Who Served

(VA Boston Healthcare System, 2015)
How can libraries support marginalized populations within the veteran community?

- Veterans with Disabilities
  - ~30% of Post 9/11 veterans have a service-connected disability (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2015)

- Potential Partners:
  - Campus Center for Disability Services
  - Veterans Health Administration hospitals or clinics
  - Veterans Service Organizations – e.g. Disabled American Veterans, Wounded Warrior Project

(Hersom, 2013)
Questions?

Sarah LeMire
First Year Experience & Outreach Librarian
Texas A&M University Libraries
(979)458-9785
slemire@library.tamu.edu


