

# Meeting Students Where They Are: Implementing a Supply Vending Machine in a 24/7 Library



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This project was made possible  
in part by the Institute of Museum  
and Library Services.



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From the Heart of the Library: Stories of  
Engagement, Innovation, and Leadership

# Welcome & Introduction



*Here's an overview of what we are presenting to you:*

- Implementing an office supply vending machine in a 24-hour library
- Gathering student input to inform product selection
- Identifying key considerations
- Evaluating its impact on student satisfaction and academic preparedness

# Audience Takeaways



- Assessing student / customer needs
- Deciding what machine fits your library
- Troubleshooting processes
- Maintenance
- Switching items
- Budget
- Sustainability of project

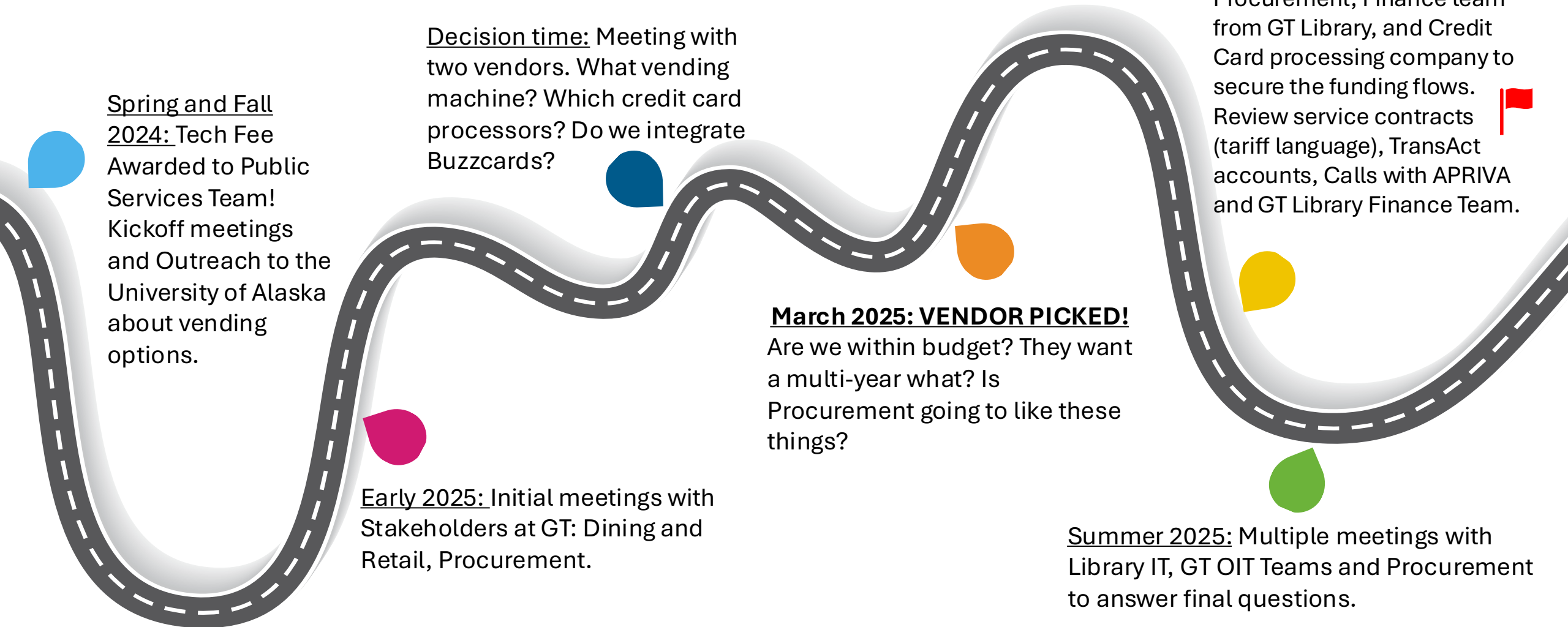


# Why a vending machine?

- Lacking options to acquire needed items at various points through the day and overnight
- 24/7 library – student bookstore closes at 4pm
- Unable to sell to students directly
- Lack of space at the Info Desk to store items for sale
- Safety: GT is an inner-city campus – we do not want to recommend students walk all over midtown after midnight



# Planning the Project – 2024/2025




Spring and Fall 2024: Tech Fee Awarded to Public Services Team! Kickoff meetings and Outreach to the University of Alaska about vending options.

Decision time: Meeting with two vendors. What vending machine? Which credit card processors? Do we integrate Buzzcards?

Early 2025: Initial meetings with Stakeholders at GT: Dining and Retail, Procurement.

**March 2025: VENDOR PICKED!**  
Are we within budget? They want a multi-year what? Is Procurement going to like these things?

Summer 2025: Multiple meetings with Library IT, GT OIT Teams and Procurement to answer final questions.

Late Spring 2025: Calls with Procurement, Finance team from GT Library, and Credit Card processing company to secure the funding flows. Review service contracts (tariff language), TransAct accounts, Calls with APRIVA and GT Library Finance Team. 

# Planning the Project – 2025/2026

Summer 2025: Vendor that all the items we chose to sell fit perfectly and vended perfectly and the build began on the new vending machine. The project team along with GT Library stakeholders did virtual trainings on how software, IT launch, financial dashboard training.

Fall 2025:  
Photos sent from vendor and IT setup payment processing.

October 2025:  
Present at Georgia Library Conference (Pt. 1)  
\*The machine was built but ran into testing issue with the credit card.

Early Winter 2026: Go-Live Preparation: Do we have enough supplies? Does our credit cards work? How are going to get Buzzcards to work? Are we trained up to turn it on?

Early Spring 2026: Lot of user testing with credit cards and how to issue refunds.

March 31, 2026:  
6 weeks of Frustration: Implementing Buzzcards – it took an email from the Director of Access Control and Campus Card Services to stop having the vendors blame each other and be solution based.

April 1, 2026  
(no joke):  
**LAUNCH**

May 2026:  
Present at SLSS

# Choosing the Right Machine

- Vending machine options for office supplies were limited because most vendors focused on food and beverage.
- The original vendor's credit card readers didn't meet Georgia Tech's security standards or support other card systems.
- Georgia Tech Procurement involved the cybersecurity to ensure the new service was secure and compliant with network protocols.



Photo courtesy of University of Alaska Anchorage Library

# Other machines and why we didn't choose them...

- Refurbished machine
- State contracts (annual, not multiyear)
- Custom fit for supplies
- Many are made for food / beverage
- Compatible with TransAct (Buzzcard)
- Other company was not as responsive



# Location, Location, Location

- Wanted to be near the Info Desk
  - Stocking, trouble shooting, general assistance
- Data & power installation – working with IT & Building
- Location plays a significant role in ensuring vending machines are accessible to all.
  - User friendly interface, cashless payment
  - Well lit, high traffic area
  - Clear signage



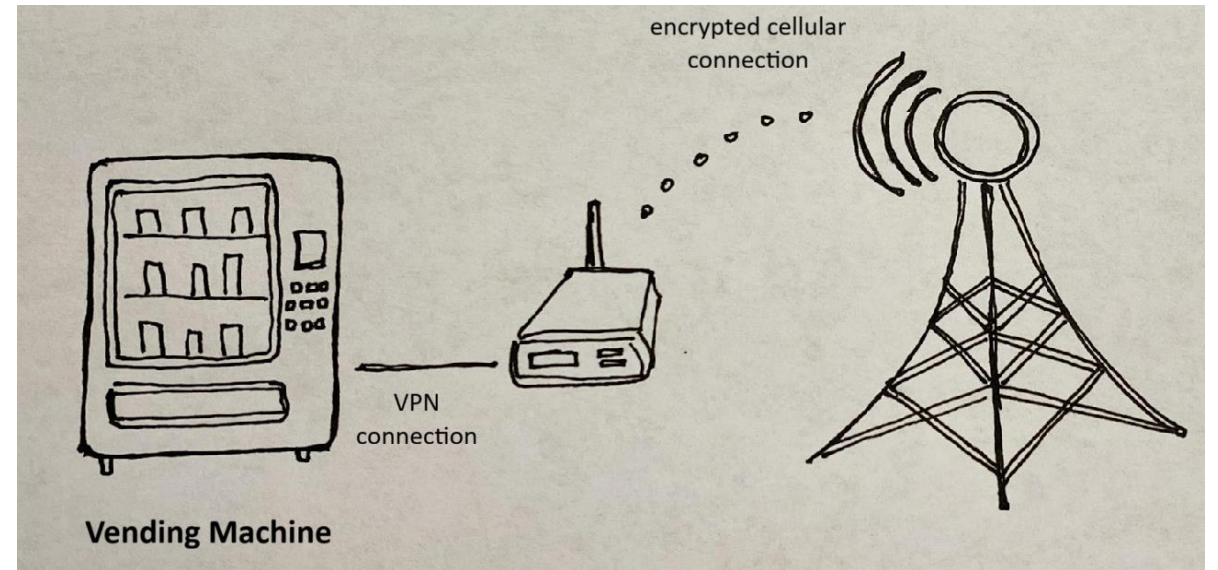
# Payment Integration



- Work with OIT for security clearance for payment systems
- Ensure our machine didn't conflict with existing vending contracts on campus
- Payment system compatibility (Buzzcard, APRIVA, TransAct, CASTLES)
- Security Review Process
  - Cybersecurity assessment
  - Credit Card processing options (TransAct, Buzzcard integration)
- Transaction Processing
  - Integration with TransAct
  - Funds to be routed back to library

# Implementation Logistics

- Communicate with Library IT to ensure compliance with institutional rules and regulations
- Budget estimations – not only the initial costs, but the ongoing costs with cellular, service visits
- Educating the library employees, IT and business department on what is needed
- Configure TransAct settings for Buzzcard (student ID) funds

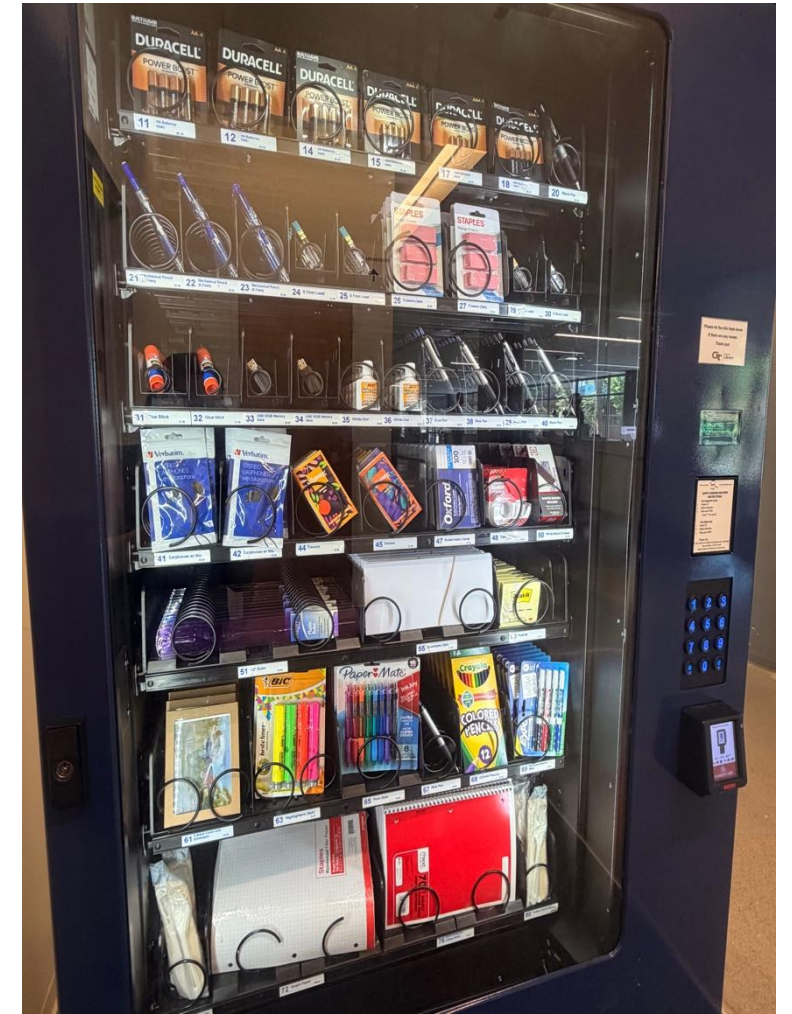




# Why These Items?



- Tissues
- Notebook paper
- Earbuds with microphone
- Colored pens
- White board markers
- Note cards
- Cutlery



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# What is working well?

- Popularity – we continue to exceed sales each month
- Sustainability – sales are easily covering supplies and maintenance
- Adding / changing product
  - We can customize labels and prices to add stationary
  - Think about seasonal items
  - Which items are most popular – Kleenex, mechanical pencils, cutlery
  - What isn't selling (.5 lead not selling because our pencils use .7, white out, graph paper is floppy)

*The Crossroads* By Kimberly Sheldon



*16 x 20 original oil painting of Judge S. Price Gilbert Memorial Library, Dorothy M. Crosland Tower and Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons to celebrate The Crossroads of Campus*

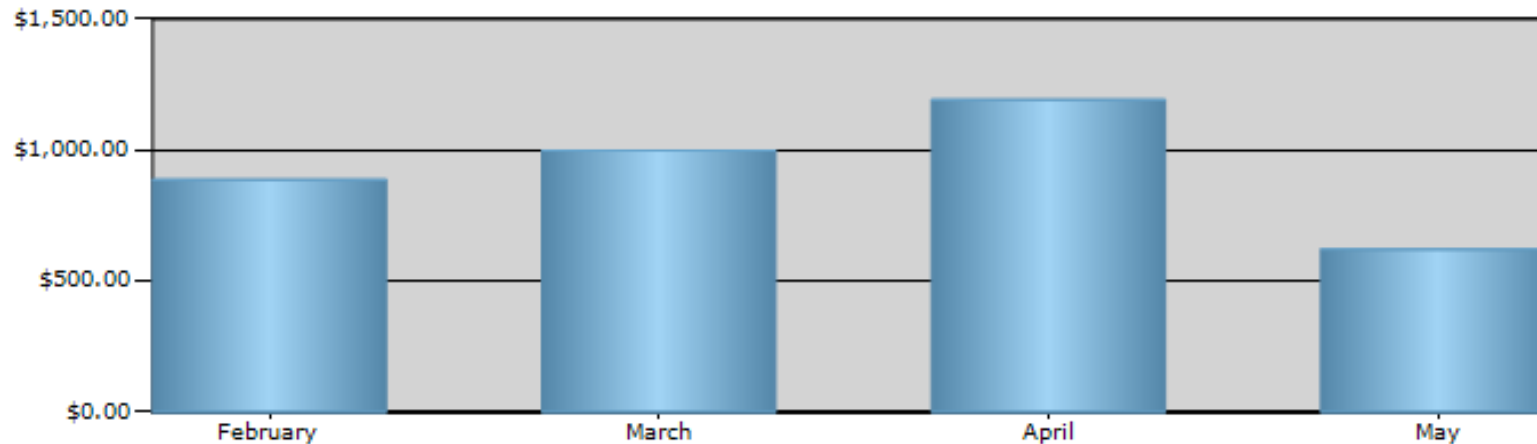
# How is it going?



## Transaction Volume by Month

2026

Month	Transactions	Volume Processed
February	312	\$887.50
March	358	\$997.50
April	430	\$1,191.50
May	229	\$621.50
<b>YTD Total:</b>	<b>1,329</b>	<b>\$3,698.00</b>



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# Marketing: New and Noteworthy Event

- Participating with other newly launched services, we had a "scavenger hunt" activity that required students to visit each new service for a stamp and exchange the completed "bingo card" for a notebook
- We were able to talk about features, the why and get feedback in real time to over 150 students



# Shared responsibility – involve the team

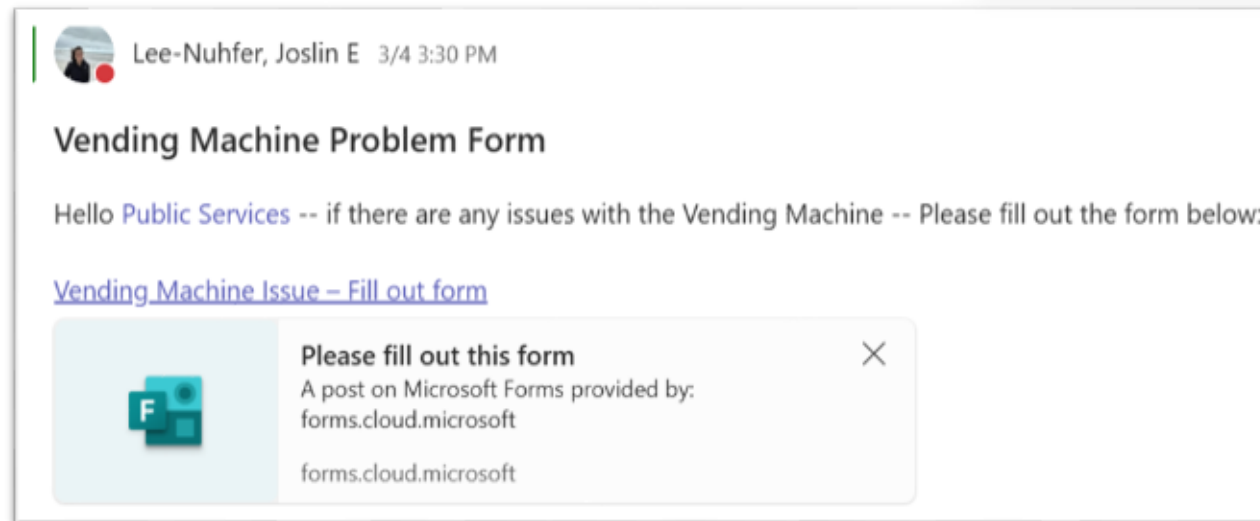


*Actual Georgia Tech Public Service team members!*

- Teamwork – creating better processes
- Shared responsibility in restock (evening and day shift)
  - Reporting issues
  - Inventory – working on processes

# Assessment – Collecting Data

- Mack Freeman, Head of Public Services, developed a form for our coworkers to fill out to keep us on top of issues that occur, what times they occur, and who is involved, what steps were covered and what needs to be looked at.
- This is populated into a Teams channel so that we can see all the issues at once.



# Analyzing the Data

PS Vending Machine Posts Shared Notes

Freeman, John Mack Monday 9:19 AM

Griffis, Kimberly L Lee-Nuhfer, Joslin E Teshome, Thomas T

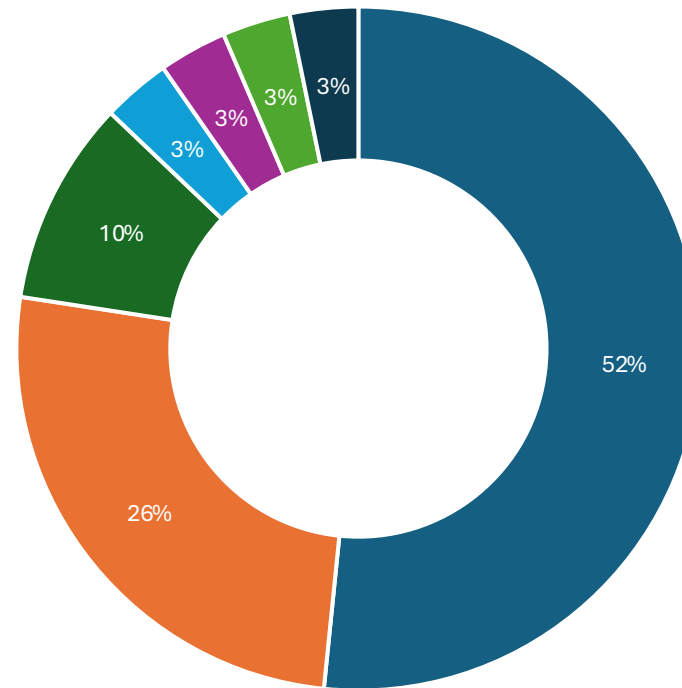
Reporter: Randall  
Issue: Card Reader Offline?  
Date: 2026-05-04  
Time: 9:15am  
Stuck Info:  
Refund Info:  
Card Reader Offline Info: Machine restarted, waiting for it to come up.  
Other:

Freeman, John Mack 9:04 AM

Griffis, Kimberly L Lee-Nuhfer, Joslin E Teshome, Thomas T

Reporter: Randall  
Issue: Item Stuck?  
Date: 2026-05-07  
Time: 8:45am  
Stuck Info: Notebook was stuck, I opened and retrieved it for patron. All good  
Refund Info:  
Card Reader Offline Info:  
Other:

## What is the Vending Machine Issue?



- Card Reader Offline?
- Item Stuck?
- Refund?
- patron unable to complete purchase
- card reader back online
- Item Empty
- Expo markers empty

# Things to Improve

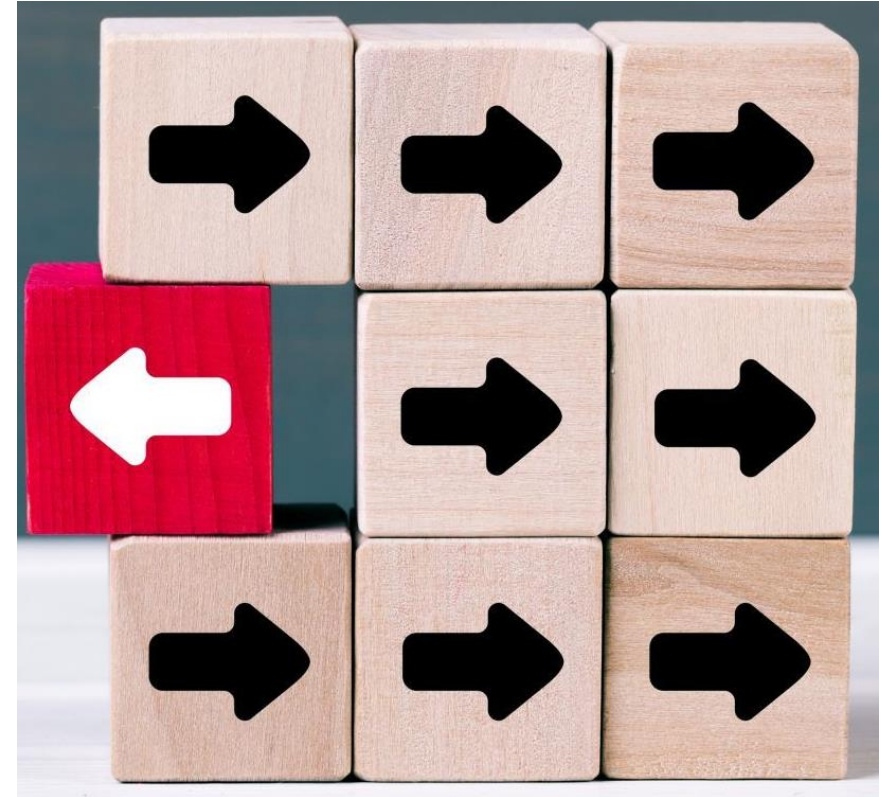
*Maintenance can be an opportunity for innovation!*

80% of the necessary work is maintenance and innovation cannot occur or be sustained without it.

- Continue working with vendors for issues
- Continue asking students for suggestions
- Continue teaching coworkers to troubleshoot
- Create better processes for Inventory / Stocking

# Next Steps – Ideas for the Future

- If we can use other suppliers beyond Staples, we could add more variety
- Surveys this fall for students to continue providing input
- Measuring results – a year of inventory will help direct purchases
- What will be next trends in studying, learning and the tools used by students?



# Summary of Project

## Key Lessons

- There are always more people involved than you think there will be
- Seek more than one vendor option
- Campus forms of all kinds
- Budget accordingly and keep some funds available for those items you will never think about
- Think outside the box when it comes to changing out items
- Create a tracking solution:
  - Items getting stuck, running out, etc.
  - Feedback from patrons
  - Issues with payments



# ...A Feel-Good Story

*"As Christina and I were greeting students this morning, this student stopped by the vending machine and purchased a notebook. I asked her permission to take her photo and asked what she liked about it.*

*She then told me and Christina how it is so much cheaper than the '\$15.00' type of notebooks from the bookstore and since we are open all of the time that she has been telling her friends to come and buy stuff here.*

*She said she was so happy to have a place to buy things that were affordable and also would be back to buy the pencil lead (she first had to check what size fit her pencil).*

*She had nothing but good things to say about the machine."*



# Acknowledgements

- Thank you to:
  - Lorelei Sterling from the University of Alaska Libraries
  - Georgia Tech Library Colleagues
    - Dean of Libraries, Dr. Leslie N. Sharp
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    - Greg Oliver, Michael Patten, Robert Jordan (Georgia Tech Library Building)
    - Hassan Marshall and David McDuffie (Georgia Tech Library IT)
    - Mack Freeman, Eric Brower, Christina Tatum (Public Services Leadership Team, Georgia Tech Library)
    - Thomas Teshome, New Service Manager for Day-to-Day Operations
  - Georgia Tech Stakeholders
    - Manisha Mishra (Georgia Tech Buzzcard Office)
    - Nicci Shepard (Georgia Tech Bursar's Office)
    - Siomara Plasencia (Georgia Tech Procurement)
    - Joe Brown (Georgia Tech Access Control and Buzzcard Office)

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