

Faculty-Librarian Collaboration

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Some folks come to the college library fully expecting the experience be excruciatingly dull, and we are not necessarily referring to students. If truth be told, as a faculty member, I (first person throughout refers Sharon Hollander) probably would not have partnered with a librarian or even made my way across campus for a visit. However, one of my courses, "Psychological Basis of Education," mandates a library orientation session for students. Once in the session, I was impressed with the bibliographic instruction, or BI. I also realized that the majority of my students did not know how to navigate the library and make the best use of its resources. The era of the library as a quiet, orderly repository for scholarly knowledge is gone. It has morphed into a more comprehensive institution, the "teaching library." I was surprised to discover that I was not capitalizing on all of the college's databases, online services, and other pedagogical supports for faculty. After the library instruction, I thought over a few questions:

What professional on campus is available to students nearly around the clock? The librarian! Library professionals serve as a support system, providing assistance, encouragement, and informal advisement to students. In addition, on many campuses, the library is the custodian of various resources that support learning, such as audiovisual labs and collections, writing and study skills centers, special collections, and coffee bars.

What do college librarians really do? Their traditional tasks include reference work such as answering students' questions and directing them to resources, and collection evaluation and development. These are important responsibilities, but the newest, and perhaps the most interesting role is that of a liaison or specialist who works with students and faculty from specific departments and schools. This includes advocacy (e.g., representing the interests of their designated school or department at library and college-wide meetings), assistance, troubleshooting, and more. In addition to traditional BI, many college librarians have become more active and involved in instruction.

Why is faculty-librarian collaboration worthwhile? Librarians and teaching faculty have many mutual goals and concerns. Both want students to develop a greater understanding of and respect for books, journals, and other intellectual property. Both want to enhance student literacy, particularly information literacy, and help students become writers, problem solvers, critical thinkers, and self-directed, lifelong learners. Lastly, both want to build the social and learning community on campus.

Librarians and faculty have a great deal to offer students and each other, especially in this "Information Age." To succeed in college, students must be able to: 1) work independently on computers, using electronic databases, online catalogues, and the Internet, as well as print resources; 2) evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information; and 3) understand issues of copyright, access, privacy, free speech, and censorship.

OBSTACLES TO FACULTY USE OF THE LIBRARY

Unfortunately, not everyone has embraced the idea of the teaching library and faculty-librarian partnership. Many professors underestimate librarians and view them as subordinates, sometimes as research assistants or babysitters for classes during out-of-town conferences. Some professors do not work with librarians because their students are part of a special population, such as honors or graduate students, who are mistakenly thought to be more knowledgeable and accomplished than typical undergraduates. Some faculty have simply never thought of how librarians could help them achieve course goals. Sadly, teaching itself is not valued on some campuses, so faculty may not choose to engage in cooperative instructional projects. Faculty may have encountered librarians who were unresponsive to faculty feedback and requests, had little enthusiasm for building coalitions, or may not have been interested in greater involvement in teaching or Psychology as a discipline. Social factors also affect collaboration. A fair number of professors and librarians spend most of their time working alone or with close colleagues and may have substantially different professional cultures. Finally, as with any relationship, there are a host of personality variables to consider.

USE OF THE COLLEGE LIBRARY AND LIBRARIAN IN TEACHING

Faculty-librarian collaboration can yield many creative projects that enhance instruction. These endeavors come in all shapes and sizes. They may be formal or informal, individual or institutional, ongoing or a “one shot” deal. Some cooperative efforts are college-wide; others involve just a few professionals.

Start With the Basics

At times, the goal is merely to get students into the library and to make contact with a helpful librarian. Incorporating a library assignment into a course syllabus is a simple but valuable type of partnership. Professors may require each student to use the reference desk to help develop a term paper. One of my colleagues asks students to come up with a set of questions relevant to their paper and to note the responses to these queries from a librarian. Sometimes a librarian must sign off on a preliminary bibliography that provides an opportunity for discussion of research strategies and the quality of references (Fister, 2002). Be sure to consult with your librarians before the assignment is defined and the course begins. They often have helpful suggestions. Also alert librarians about your assignments that send students to the library, so they can be prepared to best assist your students.

Think of Librarians as Teachers

Traditional bibliographic instruction is very broad and covers topics like library services, general information on the library’s Web site and subscription databases, and the use of Internet resources. It is often offered to incoming students. Course-integrated instruction is a newer, more focused option for faculty. These are customized teaching sessions that emphasize discipline-specific information literacy. The heart of this type of library instruction is the location and evaluation of resources including specialized journals, reference materials, and databases, such as PsycInfo, ERIC, and ScienceDirect.

After instruction, a typical activity or assignment focuses on comparing popular, primary, and secondary resources. One of the more interesting versions was described by Randi Stocker, a librarian from Indiana University-Purdue University. In the lesson, students are given index cards listing various resources such as an encyclopedia entry, lecture notes, an article in *The New York Times* or a peer-reviewed study from *Psychological Science*. In small groups, students rank these from “least credible” to “most credible.” Often group members tape their cards to the blackboard in rank order so they are easily visible to the faculty member and librarian who then share their views on the credibility of the items in light of

different course assignments.

Librarians Are Indispensable for Independent Research Projects

After an introductory research course, the next step for my students is a two-semester research project. In fact, the independent research project is a hallmark of many undergraduate and graduate psychology programs. This is a terrific opportunity for collaboration. Continuous faculty-librarian support is needed to help students complete high quality research projects. In a typical institutional partnership, the professor explains the specific steps in research, and the librarian demonstrates the use of relevant resources. Stein and Lamb (1998) followed this procedure, incorporating information on both the research process and research strategies into their BI sessions. In addition to group meetings, individual sessions were offered to students who needed extra help. Carrying the collaboration through to the end of the course, both the faculty member and librarian reviewed the students' research proposals, assisted with revisions, and reviewed the results.

Use Librarians to Help Students Select Research Topics

The early stages of the research process are quite important and often overlooked. Stamatopolos (2000), a librarian and instructional team member at Purdue University, assists students with research topic selection through an activity known as "The Wall," so named because a wall is used to display students' ideas. The setting for the activity is flexible. It can be staged in the classroom or in a room or area set aside for instruction in the library.

At the beginning of the lesson, students call out broad research topics related to the general theme of the class or project, and student recorders write these on paper affixed to the wall. After there are a number of these general topics on the wall, the students leave their seats and stand next to their topics of interest. Based on these common interests, groups are formed, and the members work to narrow or modify individual topics. While the faculty member can comment on the ideas from a disciplinary standpoint, the librarian can help each group identify their information needs and suggest specific reference sources. It is hoped that groups will become a natural support system for students, and if desired, group members can work together throughout the research process.

Librarians as Consultants to Students: Term Paper Clinics and More

The classroom is not the only place on campus for student learning or where faculty members can teach their students. Christensen (1994) gives one example of how to increase student success by bringing the teacher to the library. College librarians can hold term paper clinics. During these more or less structured sessions, students can get help with their research. At some colleges, faculty members also have specified office hours in the library. This on-site assistance provides a valuable and unusual opportunity for faculty and students to read and analyze sources together.

In a less formal way, the first two authors (teacher and behavioral sciences librarian) offer students, particularly those working on research projects, unstructured time in the library when we are both available. During this period, we are able to model the research process, as well as our enthusiasm for developing our ideas and tracking down information. I think the synergy is noticeable, and the queries really fly. Given many students' initial reluctance to visit the library, it is surprising and gratifying that most continue to work and ask questions well beyond the allotted time for this activity.

The value of these collaborations and work are many. Students use the library more effectively and

efficiently, the quality of their work increases, and the faculty member can share responsibilities for students' development and learning with an experienced professional.

Making the Unfamiliar and Specialized Known

For upper-level students, faculty-librarian collaborative instruction may be more sophisticated and course-specific. I teach a class on assessment, and the primary assignment is a lengthy review of a standardized psychological or educational measure. Many students choose to write about one of the Wechsler scales or a popular, individually administered achievement test, such as the Woodcock-Johnson. A thorough paper on any measure requires the use of many unfamiliar and specialized resources, such as *Tests in Print*, the *Mental Measurements Yearbook*, *A Guide to 100 Tests for Special Education*, and various assessment-oriented journals and Web sites. Students are often surprised to learn that measures are reviewed, somewhat like movies and restaurants.

Again, the first two authors worked together to design a lesson to introduce students to these important sources of information. Every semester, we select one well-known, standardized test that would be of interest to students. Using print materials, computer demonstration, and commentary, we follow the path of this measure through many different sources. This method demystifies these references and provides a model for the research process.

Assisting With Grant Writing Assignments

I also teach a semester-long course to prepare students for a large research project in their last year of study. The class covers topics such as participant selection, research ethics, and the ever-popular APA style. Over the past year or two, I have integrated information on grant writing. Many local, state, and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and foundations, and private corporations have money for different types of projects, and grant writing skills are valuable in any workplace. I ask students to find and describe at least three potential funders for their projects. They need not actually apply for the grant, but some do, and that's even better. Faculty writing small grants funded by their local campus also may use librarians to assist student coauthors in improving their grant writing knowledge and skills.

Technology is critical in the grant writing process. Web sites often offer the most up-to-date sources and comprehensive listings of potential funders. Tips and techniques, and many forms of proposal submission, are also online. Grant writers often use current research to support their project. Templates, spreadsheets, and word processing are also part of the relationship between grant writing and computers. To address the topic of grant writing, the Librarian and I designed a course-specific BI session that introduces students to resources like *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, and Web sites such as the Foundation Center and School Grants. In addition, we guide them to the Web sites of various professional organizations such as Psi Chi, which often offer small grants specifically for students.

Librarians Can Assist With Computer-Based Projects

In addition to hands-on library instruction, professors and librarians can collaborate on computer-based projects such as designing Web pages, as well as on-line tutorials, courses, and course supplements. For example, through a cooperative effort, students in child and adolescent studies at CSU Fullerton learned information literacy skills through a specifically designed computer simulation that asked them to choose a daycare center by using Internet sources (Roth, 1999).

Some faculty-librarian teams have created multi-faceted, mega-Web sites for specific classes or

disciplines. These sites may contain course- or program-specific data (e.g., syllabi), material on information literacy (e.g., evaluative criteria for use with print and Internet sources), and annotated references and links to selected sources (e.g., Web portals, databases, directories, other Web sites). They can also include links to multimedia resources, such as video or sound recordings. Sometimes there are complaints about technical problems or editorial choices on these sites, but most students appreciate this type of virtual collaboration.

Librarians Know Content Too: Children's Books and Beyond

With so much emphasis on scholarly material, it is easy to forget that many college librarians are quite knowledgeable about all kinds of literature. One of my colleagues, who teaches a class on reading, joined forces with the Behavioral Sciences Librarian to develop a "book talk" on popular children's literature. Both partners introduce, discuss, and display a selection of high quality books for children and adolescents. Everything from picture books to timely works for teens is included. Reference materials on children's literature also are covered.

Through this cooperative lesson, students learn about topics such as reading readiness, language development, age-appropriate themes and concerns, and children's humor. More specific issues, such as educational and therapeutic strategies with books, or literature for special populations, also can be addressed. This type of session could easily be tailored for courses on child development, educational psychology, or language and literacy. Talk with your librarians and learn if this type of instruction is available and if it could be helpful to the specific courses you teach.

COLLEGE-WIDE COLLABORATIVE COURSES AND TEACHING

Although largely outside the scope of this article, it is important to note that some colleges have terrific, campus-wide collaborative teaching programs that would be of interest to many professors. Some teams are quite large and inclusive; professors, librarians, academic advisors, administrators, instructional technology professionals, and upper-level students may have a hand in planning and delivering instruction. Other groups are smaller and more specialized. For example, students on some campuses are treated to compelling, cooperatively taught courses, each developed by a faculty member, a writing lab instructor, and a librarian. If you teach general education or other psychology courses, or if you collaborate with faculty in other fields, such as biology or English, your librarians may be invaluable in your meeting course goals, and have creative ideas of assignments for your students.

Evaluate Your Work With Librarians Regularly: Are Your Students Learning What You Had Hoped?

Not everything works the first time, and some things never work. Therefore, faculty-librarian collaboration should be evaluated frequently and revised as needed. As with many instructional initiatives, this is not an easy process. Partners may want to examine their students and teams. Factors to investigate include students' attitudes and participation, and what they thought was useful or unhelpful, as well as their learning and achievement including appropriateness and caliber of sources used and general quality of projects and products. Some collaborators use an exam on library knowledge and a straightforward pre-test, post-test design; others distribute questionnaires on information literacy. A simple follow-up phone call or e-mail to students after a library instruction session may suit the needs of some teams. Partners may evaluate themselves in terms of the effectiveness of their interaction and instructional techniques.

Regardless of the method, any evaluation is likely to strengthen the growing belief that students can benefit greatly from the collective expertise of professors and librarians. The potential is tremendous when requests, comments, and suggestions flow freely between these professionals. There are many fine examples of collaboration in existence, and new ones are created every day. Faculty-librarian collaboration is a relatively new educational trend but, with practice and demonstrations of success, it will become tradition.

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