Faculty-Librarian Collaboration to Achieve Integration of Information Literacy

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Guest Columnists

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As more institutions of higher education recognize the importance of information literacy, the collaborative role for librarians is growing. Integration of information-literacy instruction is the key to successful student learning, and librarians are using various collaborative models on teams and as co-instructors in courses, learning communities, and campus-wide information-literacy initiatives. This article looks at some of the successful programs on college and university campuses.—*Eds.*

As the importance of information literacy grows within the academy, so does the importance of the role of librarians as integral members of the teaching and learning mission of the college and university. There is now a growing emphasis on teaching and learning as a component of the mission of twenty-first century libraries. At the same time, there is a growth in collaborative endeavors involving librarians and teaching faculty in efforts to reach larger numbers of students. Instead of relying on reference encounters in the library and formal library instruction, librarians are working to promote collaboration with faculty and campus units in an effort to integrate information literacy into the curriculum. Although the concept of librarian and faculty collaboration is not new, the commitment to an integrated approach has not become a trend. A review of recent literature and searching the Web showed that new forms of collaboration are making broad inroads into academic programs. This article highlights new developments in collaborative interactions in which the role for librarians is as a partner in the classroom and part of an integrated process.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AND DEFINITIONS OF INTEGRATION

The need for librarians to collaborate with faculty in order to enhance the teaching and learning process has been acknowledged as both significant and as a challenge for the field since the inception of library instruction. The recent literature continues to articulate this need, identifying successes and failures in collaboration, as well as further defining what it means to collaborate.

The importance, and yet, difficulty, of engaging in successful collaboration has been well documented. In a preface to a 1995 article by Farber, Shirato noted that Farber stayed with the subject of faculty and librarian cooperation for such a long time because "he rightly recognizes it as one of the most essential ingredients in effective library instruction. . . . Success in this area has been hard-won . . . and in many ways the battle is not yet won."[1]

Winner agrees that collaboration is essential and also notes its difficulties, identifying the areas where collaboration often fails. She comments that there is still "no widespread acceptance of the librarian's role in curriculum planning and course-integrated instruction. Teaching faculties are appreciative of the support given by librarians; however, librarians are not universally recognized as playing an integral role in course planning and teaching."[2] Winner suggests that simply working with faculty is not enough; collaboration is only successful when the interaction between librarians and faculty results in an integration of the library into all elements of curriculum planning.

Many agree with this assessment. In 1995, Rader outlined three factors on which successful integration of library and research skills (information literacy) into the academic curriculum depended:

- library administrators had a long-term commitment to integrate library instruction into the curriculum;
- librarians and faculty worked together in curriculum development; and
- the institution had a strong commitment to excellent educational outcomes for students in the areas of critical thinking, problem solving, and information skills.[3]

Simons, Young, and Gibson expanded on the concept of integration as a critical component to programming in their development of the "learning library." They defined the learning library as having:

> active programmatic partnerships; curricular integration; sustained interactions among students, faculty, and librarians; and extension of influence into a 'multiplier effect.'. . . The library becomes an essential component of students' formal education and informal research needs. Rather than an external 'add on' to the educational experience, the library, as information resource and gateway, is a primary catalyst for cognitive, behavioral, and affective changes in students.[4]

Collaboration, then, continued to be the focus of a large body of literature that agreed that it is an essential element to successful teaching and learning. As Wilson observed, "Collaboration is key if librarians are to educate their clientele to be critical and self-sufficient users of information."[5]

CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILLS NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

In addition to emphasizing the need for and more clearly defining the concepts of collaboration and integration, the recent literature has begun to articulate and define the elements of successful collaborations and the skills that librarians need in order to successfully interact with faculty. While many articles suggest these skills indirectly, there is a growing body of literature that specifically addresses this topic.

Lippincott has written several articles on the importance of collaboration that emphasize the broad range of skills required to operate in a digital world and to work with faculty in educating students to find, critically evaluate, and use information successfully. She suggests that to be most effective, these collaborations should involve librarians in the development of the learning program. Librarians must be fully prepared and feel competent to work with classroom faculty in teaching students how to use technology to access information and then how to utilize critical thinking in the selection of information. She notes that there are a variety of factors that encourage success in cross-sector collaborative teams, including a "willingness to shape a common mission outside of the unit-specific mission; interest in sharing jargon and definitions of technical terms; willingness to learn aspects of the other partners' expertise; and ability to appreciate differences and not criticize or stereotype others' professions."[6]

In a 2002 study to attempt to identify the elements that create a successful collaboration, Ivey interviewed seven librarians and seven academics who were already working in partnerships in an attempt to identify the elements most important to collaboration. She defined four behaviors essential for successful collaborative teaching partnerships:

- shared understood goals;
- mutual respect, tolerance, and trust;
- competence for the task at hand by each of the partners; and
- ongoing communication[7]

In 2004, Bell and Shank took the concept of integration one step further with the idea of a "'blended librarian' as an academic librarian who combines the traditional skill set of librarianship with the information technologist's hardware/software skills and the instructional or educational designer's ability to apply technology appropriately to the teaching-learning process."[8] Librarians and academics are becoming increasingly aware of the need to provide programs that develop student communication and research skills (information literacy). The examples of programs that exemplify information literacy or new methods of communication are well documented in the literature. However, the need for these two to become one—or integrated—is now emerging along with the need to understand what forms a successful collaboration.

NEW METHODS FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

Many college and university libraries are attempting to promote collaboration by having subject-specialist librarians serve as departmental liaisons. As such, they can make contact with the departmental faculty and develop relationships that will hopefully lead to opportunities for information-literacy instruction for their discipline. The goal is to bring departmental faculty and librarians together to improve

student learning through course-integrated information-literacy instruction. Whether the collaborations result in single, well-timed instruction sessions related to class assignments, or become more involved with team teaching, they achieve the goal of integrating information literacy into academic programs. There are numerous examples showing that the depth of librarian involvement is growing, from librarians teaching information-literacy instruction as an add-on, to librarians as team members, or librarians in a coinstructor role. The examples selected for this article illustrate the characteristics of successful integration models. Most represent the first-year experience, as this is where most of the efforts for integration of information-literacy instruction into classroom instruction are taking place.

INTEGRATION INTO SPECIFIC COURSES

Mathies outlines how a library liaison to Butler University's College of Business Administration effectively built relationships that resulted in a 93 percent increase in the number of information-literacy instruction sessions over six years. This eventually led to the opportunity to collaborate with business-course instructors on a new course for freshmen business majors. The librarians worked to identify learning objectives for course instruction, and planned multiple library-instruction sessions that covered all of the instructors' course objectives including group participation and an emphasis on critical thinking about information resources.[9]

At the University of Auckland Business School, information-literacy instruction in an electronic format was embedded in a compulsory introductory management course taken by students in their first semester. The modules of an online tutorial were designed to complement and to be accessed in conjunction with course assignments by students in multiple sections of the course.[10] "Through cross-disciplinary collaboration on course design, delivery, and assessment, librarians and teachers created a student-centered information-literacy program for developing the skills identified . . . as being essential for business students, e.g., to effectively locate information and critically evaluate its usefulness."[11]

At Penn State University, librarians collaborated with faculty in the First-Year Seminar in the School of Information Sciences and Technology in developing and delivering course-integrated library instruction employing problem-based learning. Pelikan and Cheney have written about using problem-based learning to help students discover through experience how the library, its resources and their use, and varying approaches to research are basic to problem-based learning.[12] The development process involved close cooperation between faculty and librarians in developing the content for the multiple sessions for this team-based learning, where the librarians are functioning in a co-instructor role.

As Thaxon, Faccioli, and Mosby point out, difficulties in implementing collaborative programs are not uncommon. However, what distinguishes the collaborative endeavors mentioned here is not the time commitment for the librar-

ian, the number of sessions being taught, or the number of students being reached; it is the level of librarian involvement in terms of goal setting and course development.[13] Whether viewed as subject expert, as team member, or as coinstructor, librarians have been successful in developing course-based integrated instruction that can result in successful student learning, but librarians have also been successful in integrating information-literacy instruction into courses through learning communities.

USING LEARNING COMMUNITIES TO DEVELOP COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATED INSTRUCTION

While the resurgence of learning communities has been strong in the last ten to twenty years, the first "learning communities" date to the establishment of the 1927 Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin. The resurgence, according to Lippincott, dates to the 1960s and "connotes a distinct program within higher education institutions that develops an interrelated common curriculum enabling students and faculty to build connections between disciplines"; the rationale is that students will experience deeper learning if courses are linked in some way.[14] The current learning-community movement came about because of the efforts of the Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education and a grassroots consortium of the faculty at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. In addition, in 1995, the National Learning Communities Dissemination Project—involving twenty colleges, mostly community colleges, small liberal arts colleges, some regional universities in California and Wisconsin, and a half-dozen research universities—focused attention on the benefits of learning communities.[15]

By definition, a learning community is any of a variety of curricular structures that link several courses together or actually restructure the curriculum altogether so that students have opportunities for deeper understanding and more opportunities to interact with each other, according to Gabelnick and others from Evergreen State.[16] Learning communities involve

> a set of pedagogical approaches . . . including collaborative and cooperative learning, peer teaching, discussion groups and seminars, experiential learning, labs and field trips, problem-based learning, lectures and demonstrations, writing and speaking across the curriculum, and ongoing reflection, metacognitive activities, and self-evaluation.[17]

These types of collaborative-learning structures can provide a natural fit with the concept of information literacy and lifelong learning.

The benefits of learning communities to students are numerous, but extend beyond students to faculty and the entire institution. According to Kellogg, "students involved in learn-

ing communities show an increase in academic achievement, retention, motivation, intellectual development, learning, and involvement and community," and "institutions report that learning communities draw diverse elements together toward a common goal, which improves the overall campus climate. Learning communities have proven to be a practical solution to long-standing, complex educational issues."[18] This drawing together can provide the impetus for librarian-instructor collaboration. Also according to Kellogg, learning communities employ a variety of models of collaboration allowing for integration including: coordinated studies, linked courses, freshman interest groups, learning clusters, federated learning communities, and variations of these.[19] Learning communities are also playing a role in the integration of information literacy into curriculum as illustrated by the examples of learning community and first-year experience programs where librarians are playing integral roles at the University of Maryland, Iowa State University (ISU), and the University of Utah.

Freshman Interest Groups

Freshman interest groups link together freshman courses by theme and allow students of similar interests or majors to band together for both intellectual and social interactions. At the University of Maryland, the First-Year Learning Communities have moved to a freshman interest-group model where courses offer students a kind of academic map with a home course and other courses at the 100 and 200 levels. In addition, librarians worked with the Office of Information Technology to create an online information page, "Information Literacy: The Web Is Not an Encyclopedia," defining the role of the Web and the library and information that is being used with these learning communities.[20] In 2002, the University of Maryland Baltimore Campus also began working to collaborate with other universities and institutions in the state to promote the information literacy program.[21]

Linked or Paired Courses

The "linked or paired courses" model, in which two courses are linked or paired and coregistration is encouraged, is characterized by common themes, and is one of the simplest forms of learning community. At ISU, learning communities began in 1995 as a movement to improve undergraduate teaching, enhance learning experiences, and improve student retention. The ISU learning community model, however, includes a variety of linked or paired collaborations where library faculty are using the ISU Library Instruction Commons as their vehicle for collaboration and integration.[22] The Instruction Commons is defined as "an information-literacy program designed to integrate electronic resources and library research instruction into all levels of the ISU curricula." It has served as a means for librarians and faculty to create Web-resource pages that serve (1) as a place for course research-material links to reside, and (2) to encourage development of information-literacy skills within specific disciplines.[23]

At the University of Washington, the goals for information-literacy instruction are imbedded in an elective Freshman Seminar class that is linked to other courses that have a research component. Librarians are assigned to each section of the seminar and train students who act as peer facilitators for the class.[24]

Hybrid Model

Many times, learning communities do not strictly follow any specific model, but rather integrate several in an effort to create a model that works best for the resources available. At the University of Utah, all freshmen are eligible to participate in a learning-community program called the Leadership Education for Advancement and Promotion (LEAP) Program.[25] As is typical of learning communities, the students work in small groups and connect with faculty. Beginning in 1995, the library began to collaborate with LEAP faculty to offer a series of library sessions to dovetail with the students' classes, having the goal of integrating research strategies seamlessly into student projects. During ten library visits, the students are introduced to the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) information-literacy standards with the emphasis placed on the research process, patterns used in searching electronic resources, structure and organization of information, and strategies of critical thinking. Each library session includes a student-peer mentor and a faculty member to assist with the sessions and provide carryover for the students. Librarians in the program felt that the most rewarding part of LEAP Program for them was "the ability of participating librarians to develop working relationships with the both the LEAP students and faculty."[26]

CAMPUS-WIDE INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAMS

While learning communities and other vehicles of individual faculty-librarian collaborations have proven successful on a small scale, the goal of campus-wide and system-wide programs have, for the most part, remained unrealized. Programs that have gained widespread acceptance are the ISUComm program accepted by the Faculty Senate at ISU and the system-wide program accepted by the regents for the California State system.

California State University

One of the more widely known campus-wide information-literacy programs began in 1993 at California State University (CSU) when the Council of Library Directors (COLD), in desiring to create a plan which would take the CSU libraries well into the twenty-first century began a strategic planning process, which resulted [in 1994] in *Transforming CSU Libraries for the 21st Century: A Strategic Plan of the CSU Council of Library Directors*.[27] One of the areas identified for needed action was information competency and it was made a high priority.[28] A work group was formed that:

guided the implementation of various projects through an active program of competitive grant proposals. These have resulted in the development of web-based instructional tutorials, summer faculty development workshops to reshape curricular offerings, outreach effort to high schools and community colleges through teacher-librarian collaboration, support for a campus online information competence graduation requirement, and the creation of various information competence courses and programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Faculty/librarian partnering has been a key objective underlying the work group's activities.[29]

The scope of the program is remarkable in that it encompasses all the universities in the CSU system, endeavoring to integrate information-literacy instruction in the entire undergraduate curricula by training faculty and providing them with the tools to incorporate information literacy into their instruction.

In a 2005 article, Lampert describes one of the many successful collaborations between librarians, faculty, and administrators to result from this program. At California State Northridge, an "Information Competence" grant was used to identify three information-competency skill sets (Basic, Research, and Professional/Field competencies) as part of the educational psychology and counseling department's new learning outcomes for graduate students.[30]

Iowa State University

Following another approach to integration, ISU, in the fall of 2005, received Faculty Senate approval for a new freshman and sophomore communication requirement called ISUComm that integrates information literacy as part of WOVE (written, oral, visual and electronic communication).[31] Discussion relating to the need for change began when a 1999 survey of more than one thousand ISU instructors and one hundred employers of ISU graduates identified both the importance of communication skills as well as limited satisfaction with existing student skills. Symposia in 2000 and 2001 on communication education led to the formation of a university committee to develop a new curricular plan. Members of this committee included faculty representatives from departments (including English, Speech Communication, and Communication Studies) as well as three librarians. Guiding principles were to develop a course that would lead to student competence in (1) three interrelated areas of communication: written, oral, and visual, and (2) competence with electronic tools such as Web pages, electronic discussion lists, conferencing, and online course tools such as WebCT. The impetus to include information literacy came from the tenets of the Instruction Commons, an information-literacy program already being used at ISU.

The freshman-year semester course was piloted in fall 2003. It involved ten sections to introduce college-level communication strategies with an emphasis on civic issues and academic discourse. During the 2003–2004 school year, two members of the library faculty met weekly with four English faculty members to discuss the progress of the students and to continue planning for the future units. The sophomore-year course, piloted with four sections during spring semester 2004, continued with an emphasis on more advanced communication strategies and civic issues. The stated goals of this new collaboration were to move the focus from teaching to integrated learning.

During the 2004–2005 school year, the number of sections being taught doubled, and in 2005, the Faculty Senate voted to officially replace the current freshman two-semester English requirement with the two-year ISUComm requirement.[32] The librarians no longer have direct involvement with teaching the course, but the information-literacy standards remain as integral parts of the ISUComm course goals and objectives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As partners in the classroom, librarians are becoming involved in collaborative endeavors and in a variety of efforts working toward total integration of information literacy into the teaching and learning process. The models are varied and the impetus has come from a multitude of directions: librarians, teaching faculty, and administrators. The most far-reaching efforts are those where library and university administrators have recognized the importance of information literacy and have set institutional rather than library-centric objectives, and allowed for the time commitments required for collaborative projects by librarians and discipline faculty within their responsibilities.

While librarians continue to be included in the teaching mission of the university on a course-by-course basis, it is still rare that the inclusion of the librarian is integral to the mission of the course or the curriculum in any major way. However, information-literacy standards continue to work their way into the fiber of university curriculum. Perhaps, as Oberman says in her introduction to *Information Literacy Instruction,* "the information literacy movement has grown and matured from a grassroots movement to a current wave of national professional initiatives and a heightened sense of the importance of information in our society."[33] She goes on later to say something that may be more important for the programs covered in this survey: "librarians don't own information literacy and information literacy is not always described in the terms that librarians would use . . . but it is . . . organizations that embrace the importance of information literacy."[34] Librarians need to continue to prove their place within the curricular structure of the university, and as Bell and Shank point out in their article on the "blended librarian," this will happen only when librarians understand the pedagogy of instruction and adopt principles of instructional design, theory, and practice.[35] Librarians and administrators need to continue to build and maintain campus-wide relationships because one never knows when the opportunity for collaboration and integration will present itself. According to Rockman, "Information literacy is truly a new instructional

pedagogy and a change agent for learning. Only by working with educational stake holders on and off campus can information literacy goals be achieved."[36]

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