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## Information Literacy for Branch Campuses and Branch Libraries

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## **Information Literacy for Branch Campuses and Branch Libraries**

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### **Introduction**

Teaching students how to use the college library has been a challenge for academic librarians for most of the twentieth century and has emerged as a high priority for academic librarians in the twenty-first century as well. A cursory comparison of objectives of library instruction from Shores (1939) shows that they are not significantly different from those in current information literacy texts; however, instructional methods have changed significantly. Technology has been both a blessing and a curse for information literacy. Technology provides distant library users with more options, but there are fewer universal standards of access. In the pre-digital age, all academic libraries used the same access tools and most card catalogs used Library of Congress subject headings, ALA filing rules, etc. Students were better able to transfer research skills learned in one library to other academic libraries. Transferring literacy skills in a digital age is more difficult because of the differences in computer systems.

Although information literacy objectives are a constant, teaching methods and pedagogy must be structured differently in different teaching-learning environments. Information literacy programs may be informed by examining experiences outside the norm, outside the usual or the assumed settings, in the borderlands of a library's operations. This requires expanding the proverbial box, adapting administration, revising programs, and establishing new policies for success and for student learning. Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) is a public university with 14,000 students and three campuses. The

main campus is in Indiana, Pennsylvania, with branch campuses in Northpointe and Punxsutawney. Although information literacy objectives for branch campuses are identical to those of the main campus, teaching methods and pedagogy must be different.

## **Academic Requirements**

IUP branch campus academic requirements are the same as main campus requirements. Students typically attend a branch campus for three reasons: convenient location, low scores on entrance exams, or a program of study not offered at the main campus. These elements are influential in shaping library instruction for branch campus students.

Course grades on transcripts carry no campus indicator. A small number of core faculty are assigned to the branch campuses, but the bulk of branch campus courses are taught by faculty whose primary appointment is at the main campus. Branch campus students need as much information literacy instruction as main campus students. Because branch students do not have easy access to the central library, information literacy must include more emphasis on full-text document access and delivery.

## **Curriculum Concerns**

There are curriculum differences, particularly with specialized programs that are unique to our branch campuses—culinary arts, electro-optics, paralegal, nursing, and medical technology. Since these students are not required to take all of the general education courses required by baccalaureate students, information literacy must focus on specific technical resources to support the specialized coursework. Technical details are more important than critical analysis. Graduate students in education, criminology, and labor relations are more likely to need practice in identifying and interpreting scholarly journal articles. Bibliographic instruction at one branch is entirely directed at first-year students who are considered to be at risk for college success. At the other branch campus, approximately 90% of bibliographic instruction is geared to graduate and technical students. At the main campus, the mix is approximately 85% for undergraduate, topic-driven instruction, and 15% for graduate instruction. Between 2000 and 2005, bibliographic instruction increased by 157% in the IUP Libraries. The differences among student bodies means that branch campus librarians must modify the basic information literacy curriculum to meet local campus needs. Librarians teach smaller numbers of students but in more specialized environments and spanning fewer academic courses.

In order to be successful, branch campus librarians must schedule evening and Saturday instructional sessions, work more closely with students and faculty, and often provide on-going instruction throughout the semester. Individual bibliographic instruction sessions have been popular and beneficial, especially for non-traditional students with outside obligations. In contrast, main campus librarians are concerned about trying to reach all students, especially undergraduates, with programs that are tailored to meet course requirements.

## **Policy versus Flexibility**

Librarians at IUP are faculty who use the same guidelines for tenure and promotion as other faculty. Librarians have nine-month appointments with optional summer employment. IUP is a public institution, and library faculty and support staff are unionized.

Although this status is beneficial for librarians, it can pose some problems for library administrators, who must ensure that policies are implemented across the university system. Branch campus librarians and support staff report to the Dean of Libraries rather than reporting to the local campus dean. Our experience has been successful because positive administration/faculty relationships have been established. Both library and university administrators have supported the branch and departmental librarians who have been willing to be risk takers and explore new models of information literacy. Partnership is a crucial component of these new models. Cunningham and Lanning (2002) describe eight collaboration techniques for information literacy: library liaison program, faculty workshops, faculty development centers, faculty/library resource approach, collection development specialists, traditional library instruction, a one-credit information literacy course, and discipline-specific information literacy courses forming a more complete library instruction program. Farber (1999) provides a personal retrospective overview of cooperation and collaboration between librarians and college faculty. He has demonstrated the importance of information literacy for students and the value of cooperation between faculty and librarians in that endeavor. Librarians must search constantly for new approaches to information literacy—consider differing kinds of needs and investigating new models of instruction. Rader (2001) believes that “academic librarians need to be aggressive, able to take risks and work with their academic environment to be successful in this competitive information age” (p. 191).

### **The Embedded Librarian—Same Policies, More Latitude**

Hearn (2005) found that embedding the librarian in an undergraduate classroom had an “impact far beyond just the targeted objectives” (para. 33), noting also that scheduling and administrative concerns were very important. Several years ago, IUP's Northpointe Campus librarian began to experiment with a model of bibliographic instruction that blended information literacy into the graduate classroom. The librarian became a teaching partner in the six thematic units of the graduate program in education. The librarian served as the co-instructor, taught the research material, and participated in assigning students' grades (p. 219).

Hooks and Corbett (2005) reported similar results from embedding the librarian in a two-year master's in education program. The librarian attended every weekly evening class through six thematic units. Each thematic unit was six credits. The two summer thematic units met twice each week in the evening for five weeks. The librarian was not only responsible for research instruction, but led research discussions on various instructional topics, led book talk sessions, and advised students in group study sessions. Hearn's experience involved the librarian making eight separate instruction contacts in multiple undergraduate sections of English 102 classes spanning one semester. Both models of embedding the librarian in a classroom setting reported the following outcomes: students use more scholarly resources, students developed a stronger preference for aggregated databases over Internet sources, students developed a more focused approach to research, students demonstrated higher levels of critical analysis, and faculty have become stronger advocates for information literacy.

### **The College Librarian at IUP**

Information literacy on the main campus but outside of the central library has also taken new directions, especially in the Music Library where the concept of the college librarian is well-developed. The Music Library at IUP traces its roots to the early 1960s when a growing Music Department needed a place where students and faculty could listen to

music and study it with scores. The music history professor at the time started the collection and stored it under the piano in his office. Materials were initially purchased out of the supplies budget of the Music Department; or as one colleague put it, "this is the music library that toilet paper money built." Soon the College of Fine Arts began funding the Music Library and the collection grew quickly. It had to be moved to several locations in the Music Building, eventually occupying most of the practice rooms and classrooms of third floor. In 1986, the third floor was renovated into a single large space, creating the first unified Music Library.

In 1969, the Music Department hired its first music librarian, who was a member of the music faculty. As such, from the very beginning the music librarian at IUP has been involved in teaching courses in the Music Department. A Music Bibliography course for graduate music majors has been a part of the required curriculum since the establishment of the Master of Arts in Music degree, and the music librarian has almost always taught this required course. IUP music librarians have also taught other courses in their areas of expertise. For example, the current music librarian has taught courses on Ethnic Music and on Information Literacy in World Music.

In 1980 the music librarian position was moved administratively to the IUP Libraries, and the Music Library became a branch of the IUP Library system. The Music Library received its collection development budget from the Libraries, and the music librarian served as member of the Library faculty, working on a rotating basis on weekends at other times at the general Reference Desk, bringing a musical expertise to the Libraries and to a wider campus community. At the same time, the Music Department has always continued to consider the music librarian "one of their own," as if the person were on "long term loan" to the Music Department and the College of Fine Arts. Because the music librarian teaches one of the core graduate courses, he/she has served on the Graduate Curriculum Committee of the Music Department. Although not a voting member of the Music Department, the music librarian is invited to attend all music faculty meetings and College of Fine Arts meetings. The music librarian chairs the Music Library Committee of the Music Department, with members of the music faculty representing the various areas of the department (strings, winds, brass, and voice). The committee creates policies for the Music Library, supports its collection development, and promotes its collections and services. Traditionally the Music Librarian has also been used as an extra musician when need for concerts and recitals of the Music Department. They have even planned and organized Music Department recitals.

The music librarian position at IUP offers the best of both worlds: a home base in the IUP Libraries, while still being fully integrated in the Music Department and College of Fine Arts. The current music librarian also serves as bibliographer for the Art Department. It was easy to establish a good working relationship with the Art Department Faculty Liaison after being active and visible in the College of Fine Arts.

The Music Library was a central part of the plans for a newly renovated music building which opened in 2005. It moved to the main floor of the building, occupying a prime space just to the right inside the main entrance. The Harold S. Orendorff Music Library is a beautiful, spacious, and functional facility, which symbolizes the excellent relationship between the Libraries and the College of Fine Arts.

## **The Science Librarian**

Information literacy is not something that only happens in the library, at a distance from users. The IUP Libraries has demonstrated its commitment to information outreach by

creating a new model of librarianship for the University: the college librarian. The first of these new college librarians was the science librarian. Charged with restoring an appreciation for the value and relevance of the University Libraries to the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (NSM), the science librarian position was structured to provide multiple outreach activities to the faculty and students of the College.

### **Integrating the Librarian**

Unlike the more typical "science librarian" position, the IUP Science Librarian is not the director of a science-specific library. Rather, the core of the Science Librarian position (and the overall college librarian program at IUP) is the integration the librarian into the college that is being served, so that a library presence becomes part of the life of the college. At IUP, the college librarians who serve the science and education colleges each have an office in their respective college as well as an office in the main library. Seamans and Metz (2002) discuss a nearly identical program at Virginia Tech University, which established "college librarians" for several of its academic colleges:

"Although the library had long assigned departments to individual librarians and asked the departments to appoint faculty liaisons to the library, the previous model was library-centric. The new program was designed to become user- and college-centric by taking the services out of the library and placing them in the college...As the program was designed, the librarians were placed in offices within their colleges with the understanding that 75 percent of their time would be dedicated to serving their collegiate clientele..." (p. 325)

So far, the science librarian position has spent 60 percent of the time in the college and 40 percent in the library, in part due to reference service requirements at the main library, but this ratio of service hours is flexible and may change as the position evolves.

### **Consolidating and Improving Access**

The University Libraries lacked a method for convenient access to science-specific information. Creating a number of subject guides was the first step in consolidating and improving access to science resources. Following that, these guides were folded into a "[Science Portal](#)" website linking all of these resources together. This portal site, containing links to library information, documents and resources specific to scientific disciplines, and new developments in the sciences worldwide, offers students and faculty a single location for the University's science resources. The portal met with initial success, triggering feedback for improvements from science faculty; however, it is not being used at the rate that had been hoped for. Increased marketing efforts are being planned with the goal of increasing use.

### **Focusing on Student Information Literacy**

Library instruction sessions are offered for all science courses. In the spring semester of 2005, more than 20 hours of instruction in the use of the library were given to science students, garnering approval from students and enthusiasm from faculty. Instruction sessions usually followed traditional models, with the librarian as guest lecturer in the classroom. In order to emphasize and encourage use of the resources, instruction sessions were scheduled to coincide with an upcoming project, which helped students put their instruction into practice.

Class sessions generally lasted for at least 45 minutes of lecture-style introductions to library resources, with “live” example searches and demonstrations. Feedback from these meetings has been positive—faculty members have commented that their students showed increased familiarity and higher-quality research work in their assignments.

In addition to formal classroom presentations, individual or small-group meetings were often held in the Science Librarian office. Faculty members who directed their students to meet with the Science Librarian individually commented that it was those meetings that most improved students' abilities to find and evaluate high-quality scholarly literature.

### **Focusing on Faculty Information Literacy**

Faculty must be champions of information literacy, and to do so, they must know what that means in the modern university environment. Information literacy instruction for faculty is part of the science librarian's role. Anecdotal responses to faculty instruction have been positive. Faculty members have expressed pleasant surprise at the availability of resources at IUP, and have been happy to receive updated information on how to access materials, and to see evidence of the Libraries' commitment to the academic life of the university.

In the years since it was instituted, the Virginia Tech program discussed earlier identified a number of outcomes to the “college librarian” program, both positive and negative. Seamans and Metz discuss benefits, including the delivery of services where users spend most of their time (see also Wagner, 2004); an enhanced understanding of the college and university on the part of the librarian; mitigation of the need for distributed collections; and facilitation of informal collaboration between the library and the college faculty. The Virginia Tech program also faced challenges during its time. Among those challenges were the effort needed to equip and maintain multiple offices; supervisory coordination efforts; interpersonal and political tension due to the perceived “special” nature of the college librarian role; and the question of conflicting loyalties. The authors suggest “awareness, effort, and continuous dialogue” as the best remedies for the potential difficulties (Seamans and Metz, 2002, p. 331).

The college librarian program at IUP has already seen some of the same challenges—logistical and management issues, for example, as well as political issues due to the unique nature of the college librarian position—and can reasonably expect to face more as it evolves. However, IUP is already seeing some of the benefits that accrue to this model of librarianship as well. The increased presence at NSM seems to have facilitated communication and helped rebuild rapport between the two institutions. Anecdotal evidence from the science faculty suggest a renewed appreciation for what the library offers, and the joint development of proposals to acquire new resources, along with an increasing number of requests for information literacy instruction, show tangible evidence that the library has developed a positive image in the minds of the NSM faculty and students.

## **The Education Librarian**

The new emphasis on information literacy has begun to affect how IUP hires new librarians. The success of embedding information literacy and the role of the librarian into our master's of education graduate cohort has had a major impact on how new librarians are hired, not just for the branch campuses, but for the main campus library as well. Because many of the faculty who teach education courses at branch campus locations also teach at IUP's main campus, word spread of the success of Hooks' and Corbett's (2005)

collaboration. As a result, Hooks was bombarded with requests to teach bibliographic instruction sessions at both the graduate and undergraduate level and to participate on a more regular basis in masters and doctoral programs at IUP's main campus. Although the onslaught of requests was welcomed by both Hooks and library administration, it was impossible to accommodate them all. Therefore, a retirement at the main campus library made it possible for IUP to hire someone who could help Hooks meet the needs of the faculty and students in IUP's College of Education—an education librarian.

In January of 2006, IUP hired a librarian who not only held the master's in library science but also a doctorate in education, as well as having twelve years experience in public schools as both an English teacher and high school librarian. Not only did she have the education and experience to understand and meet the needs of College of Education faculty and students, but the new college librarian understood how crucial faculty/librarian collaboration is to information literacy. In fact, the idea of an embedded librarian is not a new concept to school library media specialists.

In 1988, the American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology published *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*, which has since become the training manual for school library media programs. *Information Power* states that, "The mission of the library media program is to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information" (p. 1). For years, school librarians have been accomplishing this mission by working with faculty and administration to meet the Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning (AASL & AECT, 1998). These standards describe the skills students must master to become information literate. Following the lead of the American Association of School Librarians, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education published information literacy learning goals in its *Developing Research and Communication Skills: Guidelines for Information Literacy in the Curriculum* (2003). It is these learning goals that academic librarians now look to for guidance when teaching information literacy or helping faculty to integrate information literacy into their curricula.

Since most university faculty are not information specialists, it makes sense to call upon librarians to assist both faculty and students in identifying, accessing, and evaluating information. This is where the college librarian comes in. A college librarian serves as liaison, selector, instructor, researcher, and activist for the faculty and students of a particular college at a university (Albano, 2005). In her new role, the education librarian at IUP provides outreach services to faculty and students in the College of Education and Educational Technology. She does this by serving as bibliographer, identifying new services or opportunities to integrate library and information services into curricula, promoting information literacy, organizing and conducting workshops to demonstrate new library resources, and designing pathfinders and web pages. In order to familiarize herself with programs and curricula, the education librarian spends two days a week working out of her office in the College of Education. Her physical presence in the college not only makes it easier for her to work collaboratively with faculty and provide students with assistance when and where they need it, but it allows her to become a part of the college's culture. The education librarian position has proved successful in a number of ways, including building better and more complex relationships with both faculty and students, increasing both one-on-one and discipline-related instruction, and identifying weaknesses in both the library's collection and services based upon the feedback of education faculty and students and improving the quality and relevance of education resources that are purchased for the library's collection.

## Conclusion

Virginia Tech's college librarian program, founded in 1994, initially assigned four librarians to four different academic colleges. These individuals also had offices in their respective colleges and served as reference librarians, instructors, bibliographers, and webmasters. They, like the college librarians at IUP, faced the following challenges:

- The inconvenience of maintaining and equipping two offices, even if both are shared with others
- The continuous need for coordination between supervisors and functions
- Interpersonal tensions resulting from the perception that college librarians are unusually free to set their own schedules, are unaccountable outside their department even though their work affects other units, or are advantaged by being in unusually visible positions
- The potential for conflicting loyalties, with the attendant risk that college librarians may make the central administration look bad
- Difficulty in accounting for the time of college librarians or measuring their accomplishments in valid and reliable ways
- The need to hire people who are self-starters and can work independently balanced against the need to provide some way of accounting for the use of time by the college librarians (Seamans & Metz, 2002, p. 331)

IUP's college librarians have found, however, that their successes far outweigh the challenges they experience on a daily basis. Positive feedback from faculty and students, as well as increased student achievement, have shown this. Albano (2005) asserts that, "Subject librarians serve as a bridge between library and user, between collections and service. Nothing can stop a creative and proactive subject librarian from leading an academic library to fulfill its mission of connecting people with knowledge" (p. 205).

IUP has implemented a number of traditional information literacy activities: bibliographic instruction, credit courses, liaison programs, taskforce for web development, and faculty workshops. The embedded librarian concept is our most innovative model of collaboration, and requires communication, training, and active participation. The most significant implication for our branch campus and departmental librarians will be distance education. Liu and Yang (2004) found that distance-education graduate students use the *principle of least effort* when searching for resources and avoid higher-quality sources. Our experience has been that graduate students simply have either limited or no knowledge of aggregated database information, or how to access it. To date, research on distance education has focused on the technology rather than establishing relationships or theoretical foundations.

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