



COIL Summer Workshop July 19, 2006: **Summary**

Bridging the Gap:

Forming Partnerships with Teaching Faculty to Improve Student Research.

The workshop with 40 attendees began with introductions and announcements for the November 10 ACRL Fall Conference. David Oberhelman (OSU) then described his experience as teaching faculty and his career shift to librarianship. He saw a difference in research habits as well as library use in that faculty is much more focused on information content, i.e. scholarly information, while librarians seem more concerned with the mechanics of search engines, "proper searching", tailoring searches to a manageable number, etc.

An important workshop objective was to solicit feedback from visiting faculty about student research skills and improvements that librarians can make in their services and support of student research projects.

Session 2:

Dr. Jeffrey Spitler, Engineering, OSU, and Kevin Drees described how they worked out a cooperative agreement that helped students conduct a "comprehensive literature review". Kevin Drees demonstrated simple, intermediate and advanced search strategies that cover a very specific engineering topic, showed how to search multiple databases and receive weekly and monthly search alerts. Incoming students with limited research skills (even at the graduate level) learn to appreciate the complexity of databases, search engines and the depth of scientific literature. Both presenters emphasized that it was good for students to learn that there is no "perfect search", that working with different approaches repeatedly is the only way to cover the fast growing body of literature of a scientific field. Dr. Spitler then encouraged students to "work" with the content of that information, while the librarian kept the students informed about the mechanics of searching, library services in place to aide students with their projects. It also proved helpful to have faculty and librarian work together in the class room, formulating search ideas, modifying search approaches and results. Sort of like "throwing the ball back and forth"...

Session 3:

The faculty panel discussion was moderated by Barbara Miller (OSU). Attending guest professors were Dr. Brady Redus, Kinesiology, UCO, Dr. Jessica Sheetz-Nguyen, History, UCO, Dr. Alexa-Larson Thorisch, Humanities, Tulsa Community College, and Dr. Jeffrey Spitler, Engineering, OSU. Workshop participants had a set of sample questions on hand to start the discussion. There was consensus among faculty that the more students heard about resources and research from different sources (different librarians and faculty), the more the message would sink in. Beginning students need clearly defined assignments and structure in order to complete their work. Scheduling library instruction classes, providing a frame work with coaching, and encouraging students to be curious about library resources was also on top of the list. Dr. Spitler stated that hands-on training with the possibility of making mistakes was a helpful learning experience for his students. Dr. Sheetz-Nguyen stated that annotated bibliographies made students think why they would choose one source over another. The panel discussed briefly how Internet based information resources can be helpful as long as the student understands how to evaluate a source. Faculty in the sciences often do post their own research online so that students and peers can follow their work. Dr. Redus allows Google searches and web resources as long as students can back up the information with traditional scholarly resources (print or electronic).

Dr. Larson-Thorisch said that good communication with librarians and advance notice of library assignments and library visits help making the "library experience" a successful one, for students, faculty, and librarians as well.

The emerging key concepts of this panel discussion were:

improving two-way communication between faculty and instruction librarians (as well as other service units within library departments);
marketing more effectively library resources and library support services in place that help students to academic success;
the need for improved critical thinking skills in students to enable them to sort through the huge amounts of information available in libraries and online; finding valuable sources;
to get students in touch with their local resources (people and materials) in a particular library.

Several workshop participants wrote in their evaluations that they particularly liked the involvement of faculty in this discussion topic, hearing first hand their concerns and ideas about student research.

Session 4:

The afternoon panel discussion presented the "Librarian View" on how to approach faculty about library assignments, library instruction services, and research skills, and how to market library services more effectively.

Panel member Ona Britton, UCO, demonstrated the Assignment Machine, used at UCO to let faculty create a generic library assignment online. In the selection phase faculty can choose a general discipline, what type of resources to focus on, what topics to research, extra credit assignments, etc. Assignment Machine at <http://library.ucok.edu/instruction/am.cfm>

Roy Degler, OSU, discussed the use web pages built with Camtasia to walk LIBM 1011 students through library information. An online "menu" of services would enable faculty to access a web page with service options that they are interested in and provide action to start the process of a library service.

Gwen Dobbs, UCO, discussed a variety of issues facing the library with regard to marketing services and reaching the target "audience" (in the case of fundraising) and the target "customer." She emphasized the importance of telling the library's story – getting the word out there – finding out what people don't know about the library & figuring out the best way to tell them. For example, all library computers now have a screen saver that says, "You can get here from there."

Shari Clifton, OU Health Sciences Center, stressed that when faculty take their classes to the library, it gives librarians credibility. It reinforces the idea that information literacy is important, not just for one class, but for an entire career. She pointed out the fact that curricula are growing and professors have to make choices with their class time and student priorities. Hopefully, the library won't be something they can no longer make time for. She noted the importance of library advocates, and that building relationships with faculty who support the library and its goals is of utmost importance.

Kevin Drees, OSU, elaborated more on some of the ideas presented earlier in the day. Meeting faculty on their own turf, in department meetings, and showing faculty how big the scope of resources and services available to them is. In turn, faculty can then become spokespersons for the library. He highlighted how important it is to show flexibility in the classroom when demonstrating library resources and services. Even a search query that doesn't generate immediately useful results, can be a stepping stone to a different search approach, demonstrating to students that there isn't just one way to achieve results.

Other points that were made:

- Communication is difficult even within the library – more so across the campus or multiple campuses

- If you advertise or market a service, make sure you can “handle the business”
- Virtual reference has been disappointing, but even so, online tutorials still can provide an alternative in some cases

The last part of the COIL workshop gave participants a chance to put some ideas into practice. Jamie Holmes organized 4 break-out groups with assigned topics. Each group was to produce a short list of ideas that would make a service or function of the library useful to faculty and students.

Marketing your library

- 1) Start with a good product - yes, your very own library
- 2) Use PowerPoint presentations when you have time to consult with faculty
- 3) Use food to get them into the library
- 4) Capitalize on the NEW – use new resources, librarians, etc. as an excuse to send them information
- 5) Work through department chairs, if necessary – get into departmental meetings, find a faculty advocate who will serve as your “library champion!”
- 6) Use reference experiences to identify needs
- 7) Reach out to new faculty through orientations, sending letters, find in their offices
- 8) Consider offering all faculty a “menu” of services, online or in paper format
- 9) Be non-threatening & make sure faculty does not get the impression that there is one more thing they have to do – they tell us what they need & we work with that

Creating useful library assignments

- 1) If possible, there should always be some kind of assignment if there’s an instruction session
- 2) Ask the instructor for the assignment or syllabus at least
- 3) Consider a tiered approach (what to teach at what level)
- 4) Create customized web sites for different majors
- 5) Suggest things other than a paper: annotated bibliography, literature review, proposals, word researched in OED, cool & relevant scavenger hunt

Demonstrating the complexity of academic library research to faculty and students

- 1) Use metaphors to help illustrate process (ladder)
- 2) Use an Assignment Calculator to show time necessary (U of Minnesota)
<http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/calculator/>
- 3) Create a research flowchart – work backwards from last step, i.e. show the end product first to entice students to go through the process, then explain how to do it.

Create a one-page information sheet that every faculty could include in class syllabi

- 1) Show a picture of a librarian with an arrow pointing that says, “They’re nice!” or something else to indicate that librarians are approachable and willing to help
- 2) Include contact information with links to subject guides
- 3) Highlight cool stuff: wireless, computer lab, color printer, etc.
- 4) Include a coupon on the bottom that they could bring in for a free something (cup of coffee, help, hug??, etc.)