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The Benefits of Librarian Leadership in University Teaching and Learning Centers: An Overview and Case Study

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Abstract

Most library outreach to teaching faculty relies on direct librarian-faculty contact through liaison relationships, and not on involvement in faculty development programs. That is unfortunate since these programs, whether focusing on faculty development or on instructional development, could be a locus for librarian leadership on campus. Our survey of centers for teaching and learning at selected US colleges and universities found significant opportunities for librarians.

At Eastern Michigan University, librarians became active leaders on the university-wide Teaching and Learning Resources Team. In that role we collaborated to plan integrated services with the directors of various faculty support offices, including the Faculty Center for Instructional Excellence (FCIE), the Center for Research Support (CRS), and the Center for Instructional Computing (CIC). As a consequence of this collaboration, the support centers were able to design programs that were more successful in meeting faculty needs, and library outreach programs themselves were strengthened. This case study demonstrates the mutual positive benefit derived from librarian leadership in faculty development and teaching and learning programs.

Our paper contains specific examples of how librarians can promote information literacy and library learning while supporting faculty development and teaching and learning programs. We show how librarians epitomize the link between classroom skills and the newer concerns of computer literacy and information literacy. Based on our survey, we conclude by suggesting the types of librarian support and collaborative arrangements that would be most beneficial to faculty development or teaching and learning programs.

Introduction

In this paper, we offer a case study demonstrating the mutual positive benefit derived from librarian leadership in faculty development and teaching and learning programs. We will describe a survey we conducted exploring how teaching and learning centers across the U.S. have

collaborated with libraries, which found significant opportunities for librarians. Finally, we will conclude with some examples of librarian leadership and collaborative arrangement that most benefit faculty development and teaching and learning programs.

The context of EMU librarian participation in teaching and learning

In the year 2000, Baier and Klopfer were hired at EMU as the multimedia librarian and the faculty outreach librarian, respectively. In the past, positions such as ours would have been understood from the library's point of view as simple vectors from library to various departments and individual faculty members. There would have been no assumption that we would be leaders or even players in faculty development. In the vision of our director at the time, however, the library was to lead in many aspects of learning, including academic software support and "library in your office" resources for faculty.

When we began, we found that our actual points of access to faculty were typical for most library outreach efforts. They included:

- a 40-minute slot in the university orientation for new faculty,
- our two annual meetings for departmental liaisons to the library, librarian representation on university committees,
- and personal contact by each librarian in the daily course of his or her work in selection, reference and instruction.

We presume that this range of contact is probably also true for most university libraries. It represents the typical expectation that library outreach is done through relationships and programs created by the library and expressly about the library. Like most programs, these ran relatively smoothly, but there was not a great deal of faculty enthusiasm. In fact, some faculty members, even those designated as liaisons to the library, questioned the need for our efforts. At the same time, we ourselves perceived huge gaps in faculty awareness about library services and resources.

At that time, faculty development at EMU was facilitated through three separate offices: the Faculty Center for Instructional Excellence (FCIE), the Center for Research Support (CRS) and the Center for Instructional Computing (CIC). Co-author Karabenick served as director and associate director of the CRS and CIC, respectively, throughout the period under discussion. These three centers were housed since 1999 in the then new library building and had cordial relations with librarians, who occasionally offered seminars or other assistance to them, and took part in the team-designed Instructional Technology Across the Curriculum workshops in 2000 and 2001. There was no librarian participation, however, in the leadership of the centers, nor were center directors invited to participate in library outreach programs.

EMU's experiment in teaching and learning collaboration

We two librarians joined EMU just at the point of the reorganization of academic computing and the cutback of support for the three faculty development centers. One of the effects of these was to nudge the library back into its more traditional (passive) role. The resulting loss of support for

faculty development, however, inspired a remarkable ad hoc cross-campus team of academics and professionals interested in supporting teaching and learning.

Coalescence of the existing centers into a single administrative unit was not possible, so they remained independent, but a combination of major budget cuts, lack of administrative support and the cooperative attitude of the center directors all made teamwork more advantageous. The directors realized that collaboration and coordination of programs gave the centers more impact and expanded their reach. Therefore, the center directors opted to create an informal collaborative entity, the Teaching and Learning Resource Team (TLRT) (<http://www.emich.edu/public/fcie/tlrt.htm>). Notably, this actualized the vision of Morell Boone who designed the physical space in the library building that houses the centers with this goal in mind. Physical proximity and previous collaborative planning efforts led to inclusion of library faculty on the team as the fourth entity. Several other units were also represented in TLRT planning meetings and programs, including Student Affairs, Information and Communications Technology, student support services (Holman Learning Center), Office of Service Learning, Continuing Education, and the writing across the curriculum program. Synergy was the norm; despite its being completely voluntary, it was not unusual for attendance at weekly planning sessions to exceed 15 people.

TLRT collaboration continued for two years at EMU, building up promising momentum, until the administration effectively closed one of the centers entirely and signaled distinct lack of endorsement for the efforts of the other centers and of the TLRT itself. At that point, the Faculty Council took on the task of lobbying for a development center, and the TLRT members dissolved their voluntary efforts.

During the period of its activity, however short, the TLRT did demonstrate the advantages brought by coordination and collaboration. At the simplest level, a joint calendar assisted all the participating groups in scheduling faculty programs effectively, thereby avoiding timing conflicts. In addition, coordination ensured that all the programs were aware of each others' program plans, so that overlaps could be avoided and gaps filled in. For example, simply from coordinating our calendars we discovered that the Library and the Center for Instructional Computing were both planning workshops on bibliographic software, while no one was effectively assisting faculty to use or teach about Web search engines.

Collaboration developed almost automatically from the coordination. Using a graduated model of learning from Chickering and Gamson (1991), TLRT members plotted out a matrix of desired teaching and learning outcomes, and mapped the various programs to that matrix. In so doing we began to see how our various programs nested together, and also how we could jointly devise programs on some topics.

Librarian leadership in the TLRT

Librarians participated in the TLRT as equal partners with particular knowledge of library research and the application of information literacy in many different disciplines. Our experience on this team expanded our understanding of library outreach. We realized that library outreach did not have to be initiated entirely by the library for the library, but instead would be much more effective if it were integrated into meaningful, problem-focused faculty development programs.

Thus, *outreach* itself was transformed into something more interactive and more substantial.

Working through the TLRT, we librarians not only gained the attention of departments and faculty members who generally ignored us, but we found we could make library resources more meaningful by integrating them with other faculty development services. For example, instead of simply demonstrating subject guide web pages, or offering templates and encouraging faculty to link their syllabus to the library site, we could integrate our contribution into the Syllabus Project (FCIE & TLRT, 2001), thereby ensuring that the important library elements of syllabi were introduced in a meaningful sequence along with information about devising syllabus content, and managing the technology of online syllabi. Similarly, instead of repeating over and over that most undergraduates do not know how to use library resources, working with colleagues in the TLRT we could demonstrate the fact through extremely simple classroom assessments. Such demonstrations drive the fact home to startled faculty members in a way no manner of lecturing can attain, and has the added advantage of being integrated into other assessable issues such as levels of student anxiety about research.

In this way, our leadership in the TLRT brought us multiple benefits. We expanded our usual prodding of fellow faculty members and administrators to use the library and recognize librarians as teaching and learning resources (basic promotion of the institution); we used our connections on the team to encourage individual TLRT colleagues to make better use of information resources (thereby also teaching them that this is an important skill); and we provided evidence for the importance of information skills as a part of disciplinary learning.

In the past, we had already provided informed examples of how to integrate information skills into class work. Baier and Klopfer, for example, had done this as individual liaisons to the campus-wide freshman seminar program and as fellows in Writing Across the Curriculum faculty seminars. The benefit of working with the TLRT, however, was that we could combine our efforts with programs that are recognized campus-wide not as “promoting the library” but as “promoting learning.” This shift in emphasis and the benefits of teamwork with specialists in other aspects of teaching and learning had a major multiplier effect on the impact of our efforts.

Forms of Faculty Development and Teaching and Learning Programs

Faculty support programs and centers at U.S. colleges and universities run the gamut from none at all to a 1/2-time release faculty member, to fully funded centers with their own research components. Funding too ranges from nothing to external grants to actual budget lines. Some programs are run under the provost office, others under the faculty senate, etc., some focus on research support, some on technology and some on the classroom, while others combine these in various ways (Professional & Organizational Development (POD) Network, 2002).

All these centers or programs have in common the goal of enhancing faculty teaching skills and improving the learning environment in classrooms and elsewhere within the university's purview. Typical services include: ¹

Research development support: consult on logistics, facilitate communication among participants, serve as clearinghouse for campus services; provide logistical support and

consultation services for interdisciplinary efforts;

Curriculum design: consult on syllabus preparation and technology integration for the development of new courses and the revision of existing courses;

Curriculum evaluation: facilitate efforts by instructors and programs to document and reflect on the quality of teaching practices through teaching portfolios, peer observations, midterm evaluations of instructors, video and audio tape evaluations of instructors, two way evaluations, and custom course and curricular evaluations; advise on interpreting student evaluation and using student feedback to improve pedagogy;

New faculty support: coordinate meetings and workshops to orient new faculty, work with department heads on intervention and development issues, run a mentorship program, sponsor seminars and workshops related to new faculty concerns such as tenure issues;

Teaching and learning clearinghouse: develop and maintain a library of teaching resources; serve as clearinghouse for campus resources and information; develop and maintain an online teaching resource including downloadable files and comprehensive links; develop and maintain resources for external support of teaching scholarship; develop and maintain a list of teaching related programs in the state for funding and professional development opportunities; develop a list and maintain contact with other campus teaching and learning related initiatives and programs; establish and maintain resources to facilitate interdisciplinary program development; establish and maintain consultation services for marketing programs to the community;

Communication: develop and maintain a professional Web site; construct and publish a regular newsletter in print or online; sponsor seminars and workshops on the scholarship of teaching; sponsor virtual forums for informally exchanging teaching ideas; sponsor seminars and workshops related to promotion issues; research and obtain external funds to supplement financial support of the office;

Technical support: workshops and consultation on using computer technology for teaching such as email, online discussion, online testing, online courseware, distance education courseware, Web site creation and maintenance, bibliographic software, specialized software such as statistics, mapping, nutrition databases, etc.

Librarians viewing this list will immediately notice how many functions we already perform. We do not perform these tasks, however, as part of a faculty development package. Usually they are done by request of individual faculty members or departments. Imagine for a moment how much more effective these responsibilities would be if they were consolidated into a single set of services and integrated with the programs of a teaching and learning or faculty development center program!

Survey of library participation in teaching and learning centers

With our insights from participation in the TLRT still fresh in our thoughts, we became curious whether other teaching and learning centers included collaboration with librarians.

In order to explore the question, we devised a simple email-based survey. We sent 129 email messages to 105 different US college or university teaching and learning centers, asking them to respond by email to seven questions. We created the list of teaching and learning centers by combining existing lists available from the Web sites of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Dalhousie University (<http://www.dal.ca/~clt/ids.html>) and the American Association for Higher Education (http://www.aahe.org/projects/campus_program/campus_list.html), as well as from the results of our own searching. The questions we posed are listed in Appendix A.

We received responses from 34 different institutions, two of which simply reported that there was no teaching and learning program in existence at that time. The 32 institutions from which information was available represent 24 different states. They included private and public institutions; large, well-funded university centers as well as tiny programs run by part-time faculty members or staff.

Space: We did not think to ask the question, but 6 responders volunteered the information that their office is housed in the library, and three others respectively noted that their workshops are sometimes held in the library; the library provided an office for their staff member; or that they had been housed in the library but had just moved into their own building.

Relationships: 18 of the 32 report having librarians serve on guidance committees or boards related to their center or program. Of those 18, some librarians serve as representatives for their college or department, and some are on the board or committee due to their own initiative. In the other direction, only one center serves on the library's strategic advisory committee.

Mutual promotion: We worded our questions purposefully in an open manner to allow for all possible types of promotion. This means that the examples provided here were volunteered; more institutions may do these things but didn't think to mention them. Many of the responding centers stated that they would mention the library in their own workshops. In addition:

- Either or both send or post notices and flyers of each other's programs: 5 mentions;
Library advertises shared activities in its newsletter and contributions to center publications: 1 mention;
- Center website links to library: 2 mentions;
- Library Web site links to center: 1 mention;
- Center distributes library materials at orientation: 1 mention;
- Center mentions library in an article: 1 mention
- No promotion: 13;
- No response to the question: 11.

Communication: some centers report being involved in collaborative projects or joint programs with the library or with librarians that had them in regular communication. Others mentioned informal communication paths. Some responses suggest more remote relationships:

"We sometimes send announcements to all deans, and the Dean of Libraries receives those same announcements. We don't know who forwards those announcements and who does not."

"The Librarians also email us information that they think might assist us."

“I did receive a special invite once to hear an intellectual property speaker the library had brought in.”

Cooperation on instruction: Many centers mentioned co-sponsoring workshops or inviting librarians to give workshops on library topics, but there was no mention of reciprocal invitations to discuss teaching (of faculty, graduate students, staff, etc.) hosted by the library. Instead, 8 centers mentioned having provided assessment of librarian teaching, or otherwise offering their usual faculty services to librarians. In the context of teaching, librarians are apparently perceived as clients of the centers. As one center director commented:

“We do not participate in Library program planning, rather we have improve[d] the instructional skills of library personnel in various ways, including training workshops, videotaping or observation and feedback.”

Collaboration on programs: Centers reported actual collaborations with individual librarians or the library as a whole on: new faculty and faculty technology training programs, joint papers at conferences, joint Web site development, joint creation of an academic integrity program, and collaboration on an information literacy grant. One center reported:

“Our Center has brought instructional resource librarians into team consultations with faculty members who are redesigning their courses with our help. This type of teamwork promotes and supports both organizations.”

A few other centers also reported strong, ongoing relations with librarians:

“...we work closely together in several ways to provide training and resources to our global faculty. For example, librarians teach a module of [center’s course management system] course. (This training course is required of all faculty before they teach online[...]) This training module introduces faculty to the library and its resources. It also gives faculty a training opportunity to design or modify a sample assignment to enhance student information literacy skills. Librarians work with [center] staff in planning and providing individual faculty development workshops on a variety of research related topics. They also collaborate with [center] staff by serving on various [center] committees. For example, librarians are members of the [center] Advisory Group (whose focus is on various faculty teaching and learning initiatives) and the [course management software] Advisory Group (whose focus is on updating and maintaining the training course mentioned above).”

“Several years ago, the library participated in an incentive grants program and was awarded money to develop an information literacy project. That was a very positive collaboration and created significant good will.”

Eighteen of the 32 responding centers, however, did not mention any collaborative programs, presumably because none are underway.

Library collections: Since our survey was concerned with the support of teaching and learning, we did not phrase a question about library collections. The many volunteered responses referring to library holdings, however, suggest that some centers perceive the library mainly as a

collection. Responses included:

“...when we were doing research on how to go about turning our collection into a library, the university librarians were very clear that our library would not be connected to or supported by theirs.”

“I have moved all the resources of our [center] library to the campus library in order to make them more accessible to potential users (they are now listed in the on-line card catalog and can be borrowed)”

“The library has provided an electronic reserve of teaching and learning titles and a shelf of recommended books.”

“Our librarians serve as disciplinary partners. Each discipline is assigned a Librarian and she helps us meet our teaching needs with appropriate resources. When we have questions on developing a unit, she helps us identify resources and provides answers to our queries. We have a great relationship.”

“Library personnel help [center] select appropriate materials for faculty development.”

“...when we renovated our resource library, we met with two librarians about how to better organize our collections.”

“When we were setting up our library, one of the librarians provided me with an old copy of the ‘Librarian's Yellow Pages’ which was very helpful.”

“The chief archivist was a great help in locating relevant documents and suggesting resources to us [for a center program].”

“The Library houses the special faculty collection developed by the [center]; although the materials in this collection are chosen and ordered by the [center], most of them are processed by the Library and appear in its catalog as a special collection.”

Preliminary observations based on the survey

Our survey was addressed to directors of faculty development or teaching and learning centers, not to librarians. From the responses sent by these directors, it appears that some centers worked with librarians or the library as partners, but most treated the library as a resource or a client, at best inviting a librarian to give a talk now and then (one center coordinator actually asserted that they promoted the library in its own workshops, apparently without any librarian participation).

We were pleased to see some evidence of librarians getting involved in partnerships and collaborations on particular programs, and library efforts to get center support for information literacy initiatives. In some instances librarians were involved in program planning not because of formal or institutional relationships, but simply because the librarians as faculty members had volunteered to participate in the planning committee.

We also noted some major gaps in the relationships reported by the center directors. We saw no

evidence of any effort to offer workshops or seminars for the center staff by the library (subsequent to the survey, however, we learned of two instances, at Grand Valley State University Library (2004) and at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (2004)). As a result of this gap, typical misunderstandings are bound to crop up, such as center staff not understanding the function of online indexes and databases or the general significance of information literacy.

This lack of communication is aptly illustrated in a 1998 query sent to the listserv of the POD Network (Nicol, 1998) by a faculty development staff member who appears to have stumbled into the classic 50-minute bibliographic instruction session:

“I have been asked to do an inservice for the library staff who teach, primarily about bibliographic searches. They typically have a 50-minute period to get students knowledgeable and efficient in using the resource tools. These usually involve intro composition courses but other disciplines will request this for research paper assignments. The classes typically meet in a computer lab - poorly designed - so that they are unable to quickly check if everyone is where they want them to be. As with other courses, there will be a wide variety of skills among the students. The faculty are unwilling to give more time to the librarians for this activity. Does anyone know of resources for methods and assessment, applicable to 'one-shot-at-em' teaching?”

This staffer is apparently ignorant of the large volume of research and commentary on bibliographic instruction. We can only hope that a librarian colleague pointed out relevant resources and encouraged further collaboration.

In our survey, only one of the centers reported having been asked to serve on or advise a library committee, although it is likely that their participation in library program planning would help broaden their understanding of library instruction.

How librarians can be leaders in teaching and learning programs on campus

Libraries have the opportunity to move into relations with teaching and learning centers where we are not just a place for books, not just clients of the teacher assessment staff (although their guidance on teaching could be very useful!), not even just the place annually called upon to give the required workshop on plagiarism, but instead to be partners in supporting teaching and learning. We can do this by promoting our unique perspective from the reference desk, where we see the daily results of effective and ineffective syllabi and assignments, etc., by promoting our role not as people to run and get a book, not even just as teachers of students across every discipline, but as guides to faculty interested in improving their own information literacy and that of their students. Our experience and survey both suggest that librarians have many opportunities to work with teaching and learning centers, thereby transforming library outreach into collaborative support for teaching and learning.

The results of our survey suggest that librarians will have to take the initiative in approaching teaching and learning centers, as many of these do not appear to be aware of the opportunities for collaboration. Based on our own experiences and observations as well as the pioneering work reported from Florida International University Libraries (Iannuzzi, 1998), we recommend the following sequence of actions:

Build communication: Librarians will have to work with center staff just as we do with administrators and faculty to inform them about our activities and their significance to the university. Our message is that by working together we will multiply our effect.

The major first step must be to establish regular communication links. Some of the survey respondents commented that they felt their informal relations with librarians were sufficient, but these same centers also reported no coordination of their programs with library programs. Communication can be improved by:

- designating a liaison or similar formal link if necessary, so that both sides know that information they send over is being received by someone who can use it effectively (i.e., not sending generic emails to the dean hoping for distribution)
- establishing areas of common interest for regular information-sharing, Table of Content dissemination services, etc.
- regularly inviting the center staff for library receptions, introductions of a new database, or some event especially geared to the center
- taking advantage of the center's interest in collections by proactively discussing their collection needs, ideally before they get too far down the road of having their own collection and no method for access; if the center insists on keeping its own collection, make their resource list available in the library; offer to collaborate on the creation and maintenance of a teaching and learning collection and subject guides

Encourage mutual promotion: Simply by arranging for both entities to promote each others' programs, the library has gone a long way towards enhancing center knowledge of library programs and encouraging coordination. This can be done by:

- arranging formal paths of communication to inform each other of all programs;
- offering to promote the center programs (on Web site, newsletter, brochure rack, bulletin board, etc.) as a resource for faculty if the center does the same for the library;
- suggesting a joint calendar or other common promotion method for programs from the different entities that are of interest to faculty;

Offer instruction: Librarians should avoid condescension, but they should also make clear that center staff could benefit from library instruction. Instruction can be offered under the guise of getting-acquainted seminars (this is what we do, these are the challenges we face in faculty development) and new information updates (come learn the latest about information literacy before the faculty start asking you about it), as well as workshops geared to their interests (using ERIC to improve disciplinary teaching methods).

Encourage collaboration: Librarians can take the initiative by generating programs that require

collaboration, such as the co-sponsoring of awards and workshops (this is distinct from simply being invited to give a workshop). Further collaborative relations can be sparked by:

- researching grants and then proposing collaboration in applying for them;
- seeking out center members to co-author conference papers;
- inviting center staff to sit in on library program planning.

In promoting collaboration, librarians will have to shift attention away from the library as a collection towards its crucial role in faculty development and teaching and learning. This can be done by:

- offering collaborative research on topics such as plagiarism, copyright, and intellectual property;
- inviting coordination or collaboration in developing higher level workshops on new technologies for teaching and research such as bibliographic software, digitization, Acrobat publishing, qualitative research software, etc.;
- seeking out partnerships for a total faculty support ackage approach to topics such as researching grants, syllabus design, integrating technology into classes, curriculum evaluation, new faculty support, scholarship of teaching and learning resource development, etc.

It is our view that librarian leadership in these areas will for the most part be welcomed by faculty development and teaching and learning centers. Even our survey itself appears to have alerted some center directors to new possibilities. One wrote:

“Please send me a copy of your report. You have increased my awareness of the library as a resource that we need to use in other ways. I'd like to hear more.”

Postscript

At the date of paper presentation, EMU's Faculty Council had succeeded in re-establishing funding for a Faculty Center for Instructional Development and in hiring a new director of faculty development (Office of Human Resources, 2003). The authors of this paper look forward to creative, productive collaboration with this new center when it opens in the fall of 2004.

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Appendix A

Text of Survey sent by email:

I'm writing because you are listed as the Director or contact person of your University's instructional/faculty development center. My colleagues and I are exploring the role of librarians in such centers, and we have selected your institution to be part of our sample.

We hope you will be willing to assist us by responding by email to the following seven questions. When we have completed our survey, we will be glad to send our results to you. Please reply to this message with your response, or email your response to us: [email address given]

1. What is the relation between your Center and the University Library? (Is one officially affiliated with the other? Do staff of one participate in any committees of the other?) Please give us a specific description, including informal relations.
2. How do librarians participate in program planning within your Center? Again, we would appreciate details such as the names of any committees and the specific tasks undertaken by librarians.
3. Likewise, how does your Center participate in Library program planning?
4. How does the Library promote, host or otherwise support Center programs?
5. How does your Center promote, host or otherwise support any Library programs?
6. Please describe in detail any other collaboration between your Center and the Library or any librarians.
7. Please list the URLs associated with your programs. If you have any brochures or informational materials related to librarian involvement, please attach them to your email response, or send them by mail to: [address supplied]

If you would like a copy of our completed report, please let us know and we will forward it to you.

Endnote

¹ This list was derived in part from the job description created by the EMU Faculty Development Position Search Committee (Office of Human Resources, 2003).

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