Library Instruction in a New Culture of Teaching and Learning

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The goal of academic libraries' instructional programs is to teach research skills, technologies for information management, critical thinking, evaluation of sources, legal and ethical uses of information, and an understanding of the broad range of available information resources. As more information becomes available electronically and learning takes place beyond the physical walls of the classroom, we are presented with opportunities to expand not only the types of instructional services we offer, but the contexts within which we frame those services.

At the University of Michigan Library, we have launched an initiative to redefine our vision for the future of library instruction. Our new effort will advance our ability to support research, teaching and learning in new and vibrant ways. Setting long-term instructional goals, and establishing effective strategies to meet these goals will empower us to create programs and services in direct support of learning. By building on our core education values, using a variety of strategies to innovate instruction, and raising the prominence of our efforts on campus, we have opened up possibilities for learning that otherwise would have been unlikely. As a result, the library is increasingly viewed as a campus leader for innovation, problem-solving, and learning, particularly related to technology and information services.

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Library as Campus Leader

Themes such as building a community of learners, promoting creativity, advancing collaborative opportunities, and enriching the international learning and teaching experience are found in discussions all around campus. Whether planning for programmatic initiatives for a new residential-academic complex or recruiting tenure-track faculty members who will expand interdisciplinary teaching and research, the campus is committed to promoting a culture where students and faculty together advance learning and research, and make a positive impact on the world. Students and administration increasingly look to the Library to provide the community space, the expertise, and the leadership needed to realize these goals. The Library is uniquely positioned to transform the learning experience into a contemporary one that provides a full suite of learning options.

The scope of the Library has broadened over the past few years. This year, both the Digital Media Commons (DMC) and University of Michigan Press been integrated into the Library organization. The mission of the DMC is to provide campus leadership for new collaboration technologies and support the exploration of digital media. As one organization, we have been better able to leverage a continuum of service innovation and dedicate resources to support new learning technologies. Likewise, by joining forces with the Press, we have been able to maximize campus initiatives related to copyright, intellectual property, scholarly publishing, and on-demand publishing with an Espresso Book Machine.

Library instruction is taking on a more focused and pivotal role. Demand for instruction continues to be high from many programs across campus, while new opportunities and partnerships are emerging: Residential College, the

Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP), and the Science Learning Center. New learning technologies greatly expand the realm of possibilities. The nature of what we teach and how we teach it has become vastly enriched due to the complexity of online research. In a recent study of student habits, research seems to be far more difficult to conduct in the digital age than it did in previous times (Head, 2009). Research not only requires the integrations of tools of inquiry and effective synthesis of information in appropriate contexts, but also the increasingly difficult challenge of verifying authenticity and the scholarly nature of information. New technologies, scalability, and instructional effectiveness are critical factors that will shape the future of instruction within the Library.

SIX BIG QUESTIONS

We know that the 50-minute course-integrated instruction session has limits. We know that we need to continue developing excellence in instructors to ensure quality instruction. We know that assessment needs to be integrated into our culture. We know that the importance of pedagogy and learning theory. We have been deliberate and thoughtful in exploring the future role of library instruction. Yet six big questions remain:

- How do we identify and promote effective assessment methods of instruction librarians and the Library's instruction program?

- How do we provide a comprehensive array of services to targeted learning communities and strengthen communication with these communities?

- How do we best facilitate outreach efforts?

- How do we keep pace with and promote emerging technologies as they relate to instructional activities?

- How do we plan and develop relevant orientation activities and instruction for all our users?

- How do we strengthen the instructional skills of Library staff through staff development programming?

STRATEGIES

We have deployed a number of strategies to answer these questions: making instruction the primary area of responsibility for several positions; establishing a new instruction committee structure to elevate leadership; and forging new campus partnerships. Together, these strategies have enabled us to move our instruction program forward.

Instruction as a Primary Responsibility

Instruction is one of many competing responsibilities for most academic librarians. To ensure librarians have the time and resources available to engage in the questions above, we redefined positions, and in some cases created new ones. Our Director of User Education Initiatives provides leadership to our

instruction vision. A Learning Communities Liaison Librarian is focused on learning that takes place outside of standard academic programs and is quite interdisciplinary in nature. Learning librarians are charged with developing a more holistic approach to instruction and applying that approach to the needs of undergraduate students.

Instruction Committee Structure

We developed an instruction committee structure to explore these questions and to set priorities for the library's instruction program. Each part of the structure addresses one of the questions above, enabling us to create and deliver programs and services that more directly support learning.

The strategy to create an instruction committee structure has been extremely successful. Our initial governance structure is comprised of an Instruction Steering Committee, led by the Director of User Education Initiatives, and populated by chairs of the Instruction subcommittees, namely: Assessment, Instructor College, Learning Communities, Leveraging Technology, Orientation, and Outreach & Marketing. We also took the opportunity to bring several existing groups under the umbrella of this new structure. Instructor College was a highly successful staff development initiative (in place for approximately ten years) working to improve instructor competencies. A video task force, operating independently for several months, was attached to the Leveraging Technology Committee. Finally, FutureLibCon, a one-year task force charged to explore what skills and services will be needed in the library of the future, was brought under the Steering Committee.

The Associate University Librarian for Public Services appointed some committee members with particular skills, and rounded out the group with volunteers. To our great surprise, there were far more volunteers than the thirty-eight available seats on committees. We knew that this was the right time to establish such a structure, and the broad interest in being part of this new initiative confirmed our belief. These committees were appointed for a duration of one year. While there was every expectation that the instruction governance would continue, the one year timeframe provided opportunities for exploration, planning, and setting short-term goals to give the new structure a trial-run.

In August 2009, the Steering Committee hosted an Instruction Forum to launch the new governance structure and to host an open conversation about future directions for our library instruction program, what obstacles instructors face, and how we can get where we want to go. A definite theme emerged from the forum – namely "instructor support." Each instruction committee developed goals that would advance this theme. Goals included hosting workshops on pedagogy issues, identifying instructional needs related to technology, providing new opportunities for instructor self-assessment, and identification and prioritization of our engagement with campus learning communities. The committees have made substantial progress on these goals.

Partnering with the Campus

Lastly, we are also reaching out to other campus partners for whom teaching and learning are core values. Through these partnerships, we strive to increase the effectiveness of our instruction, explore new options for integrating technology into instruction, and to share our own expertise in developing and delivering instructional services.

Forging a stronger partnership with the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) is a priority for the Instruction Steering Committee. Through several discussions with CRLT, we identified important projects for collaboration. First would be the revision of the library workshop evaluation form and finding/identifying a suitable way to measure student learning for the Library's one-credit course, UC 174. Second, development of an assessment program, both qualitative and quantitative, that would present a holistic view of library instruction and its contributions to the institution. Third, launch of a seminar for graduate student instructors on how to incorporate information literacy into their courses, improve student research assignments, and integrate other library resources and services into their courses to enrich the students' experiences. Lastly, CRLT will develop and teach a workshop, *Principles of Best Practice for Conducting Effective Workshops*, tailored toward library instruction. Fulfilling the theme of "instructor support," this workshop will combine the best practices in general pedagogy with those in library instruction.

Learning communities, in many forms, are flourishing on campus and they are prime partners for the Library because they naturally seek collaborations to enrich the experiences of their participants. The Library took this opportunity to strengthen existing partnerships and to forge new ones. The Residential College, one of the largest living and learning communities on campus, partnered with the Library to integrate more information literacy education into its first year seminar courses. The Library created a successful modular curriculum, emphasizing essential skills, that allowed faculty to select the modules most beneficial to their students. This curriculum now serves as a model for other learning communities.

The Library has long partnered with the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) to offer workshops to its 1,200 students. To enrich this relationship, the Library developed a self-assessment tool to help students identify which skills and workshops would be most relevant for their research projects. UROP administration embraced the self-assessment tool and incorporated questions about other skills too, such as laboratory skills, to create one comprehensive self-assessment tool for students. Likewise, on program evaluations for students and faculty, UROP included multiple questions of importance to the Library. Now there is one evaluation form from which UROP and the Library obtain feedback for program improvement.

Experience has taught us that the effectiveness of Library instruction increases significantly through strong collaboration with faculty, and close integration with academic programs. Given the changing nature of the information environment and of the curriculum, how could the library play a more integrated and systematic role in the research process? This question was the genesis of a pilot one-credit course within the College of Literature Science & Arts (LSA). Since 2006, librarians have worked with LSA to develop and deliver this successful course that is now known as UC 174 – Digital Research: Critical Concepts and Strategies. This course emphasizes digital research skills, as well as broader concepts such as academic integrity and evaluation of information. The outcomes of UC 174 have had a ripple effect throughout our instructional program. We are entering a time where our different instructional strategies are informing each other in new ways and propelling us forward in our ability to reach more students and reach them in more effective ways. The relationship between our credit course and our traditional instruction has improved our ability to incorporate concepts of information literacy into our mainstream instruction programs, resulting in improved engagement of students.

The DMC has primary responsibility for CTools, the campus learning management system (LMS). With our close relationship to the DMC, the Library now has more access and influence regarding development of the LMS, particularly system features to integrate information resources and library services more seamlessly. The DMC places strong emphasis on the intersection between learning and technology with continual evaluation and improvement – exactly how the library must think about instruction. With the DMC as part of the library, instructors are excited about future collaborations and blending the expertise of both groups.

Sharing instruction materials and news about instruction activities is challenging in a large decentralized system. The Library partnered with SI 501, a course in the School of Information, to evaluate current practices of creating and sharing instruction materials among instructors in the Graduate, Science, and Undergraduate libraries. A group of students in the course interviewed library instructors and explored current procedures and available technology. They crafted a report and presentation with recommendations for improvements. The Library is actively implementing several of the recommendations, including all-instructor meetings, a shared instruction calendar, and a wiki for sharing instruction materials.

OUTCOMES & NEXT STEPS

Implementing these strategies has dramatically changed the role of library instruction both within the library and on campus. There is a tangible, renewed energy about instruction within the library. Instruction plays a more prominent role in our day-to-day thinking, even for staff whose primary role involves minimal instruction. We are also increasing communication about library instruction both within the library and also across campus. Within the library, instruction efforts are being streamlined to a greater degree and instructors are more engaged about improving our instruction, which ultimately translates into higher quality service for our users. Our partnerships with other

campus units are at an all-time high, with many more prospects on the horizon.

It has been an exciting process to see the positive impact these strategies have had on our ability to provide instruction. Our work has reenergized our commitment to instruction and deepened our understanding of the variety of ways we can and should provide leadership to our campus. It has also prompted us to think about instructional methods, sometimes subtly and sometimes dramatically. We are currently in the process of the first annual review of our instruction committee structure and recommendations from this review will enable us to move forward with instructional outreach efforts in a more deliberate fashion. Our newly implemented strategies and the leadership roles have had a positive impact on the development and future directions of our library's instruction program. By inviting the instruction librarians to refocus on our instruction efforts, we have positioned ourselves to continue offering instructional services that meet the needs of our users now and in the future.

REFERENCES

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