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Expanding the Repertoire: The Changing Nature of the Work and Roles of the Academic Library Liaison

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Why This Topic?

- Team Leader of the Library Liaison Team

- Observed evolution:
 - Expectations of the classroom faculty
 - Discussions re: responsibilities with the librarian liaisons

“Stop asking if the library has a role, or what it is, and start getting involved in digital projects that are already happening. Advocate for new expanded roles and responsibilities to be able to do this.”

-Micah Vendegrift, 2012

Traditional Library Liaison Roles & Activities 1974-~1995

- Role – Functional manager of the selection and management print books and journals
- Bibliographer- “knowledge worker...an expert in the bibliographical organization of a field of knowledge, and he utilizes this expertise to provide complex and needed services to a clientele collection development
 - Skilled assistance in maximizing the use of the collection
 - Bibliographical control of the collection
 - Selector somewhat disconnected from input from the academic departments
- Focused on building of a “core collection”, but with an evolution towards the recognition that subject specific resources were needed
(Farber & Walling, 1974)
- Beginning of interlibrary cooperation to build collections

Traditional Library Liaison Roles & Activities 1974-~1995, cont.

- Instruction took place mostly as one-shot sessions
- Philosophical shift from the previous era:
 - Responsibilities are limited & explicitly defined
 - Subject department work was silo-ized
 - Passive assistance, that is, the librarian waited for a request for assistance from the user
- To:
 - Interdisciplinary – activities require crossing departmental lines
 - Assessed by achievement of goals set by administration and quantitative numbers

(Farber & Walling, 1974)

Reasons for the Changes in Liaison Work in the 21st century – mid 1990's- present

- Rapid advances in digital technologies
- Increase in the number of communication channels
- Increased online conversations & collaborations
- Migration of resources from print to electronic & online formats
- Evolution of librarians from consumers of information to creators
- Trends toward interdisciplinary studies
- Increased expectancy for sharing of research data and publication
- STEM and medical research and their short publication cycles

(Pasek, 2015) & (Glynn & Wu, 2003)

Eastern Michigan University's Current Library Liaison Activities

Primary Activities

- 1) *Course integrated research instruction
- 2) *Special topic research instruction, e.g., avoiding plagiarism, resource reliability
- 3) *Assignment design re: student learning outcomes for information literacy
- 4) *Research guides for specific subjects and courses
- 5) *Individualized student research appointments
- 6) *Individual resource and research consultations with faculty
- 7) Assessing student learning outcomes regarding information literacy
- 8) *Resource selection; books, videos, subscriptions – communication, collaboration, sharing
- 9) Collaboration with new courses or programs
- 10) Citation management tools
- 11) *24/7 research assistance
- 12) *Present at departmental faculty meetings regarding hot topics, trends in research and scholarship, changes to library resources or services

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Eastern Michigan University's Current Subject Specialist Activities, cont.

Secondary

- 1) Scholarly impact, e.g., author rights, impact factors
- 2) Special topic research instruction, e.g., fake/pseudo news
- 3) Textbook and course reading alternatives
- 4) Serve on undergraduate and graduate thesis committees
- 5) Training research assistants
- 6) Places to publish research; journal identification
- 7) Data management
- 8) Copyright and creative commons licensing
- 9) Research and scholarly collaborations

Current Liaison Engagement – Philosophy

“Agents for Radical Positive Change”

- Directly engage & inform communities in order for them to use knowledge to achieve their dreams & aspirations (Lankes, 2016)
- No longer library users or patrons, but “community members” (Lankes, 2016)
- The old “tripartite model” i.e., collection, reference, instruction, is replaced by the “engagement model” (Totleben & Birrell, 2016)
- Requires time & freedom to work with patrons

Current Liaison Engagement – Philosophy

- Recreating our duties

(Lankes, 2016)

- Engage in lifelong professional learning in order to improve professionally

(Farber & Walling, 1974)

- Assessed by:

- the level of integration achieved with the clientele, colleagues, or community
- qualitative productivity rather than quantitative productivity

(Farber & Walling, 1974)

The Information Business Has Transformed into...

- The Knowledge Creation Business
- The Conversation Business
- The Learning Business (Lankes, 2016)

Current Liaison Engagement – The Knowledge Creation Business

- Develop course integrated research instruction materials
 - Electronic research guides
 - Tutorials, e.g., avoiding plagiarism, resource & fake news evaluation
 - Course assignment design
 - Write student learning outcomes for information literacy

- Creators of web content, e.g., podcasts, videos, webinars, point-of-need instruction to distance users

(Thull & Hansen, 2009)

Current Liaison Engagement – The Conversation Business

- Active outreach vs. passive assistance (Pasek, 2015)
- Meet patrons where they work, in dorms, online, offices, labs, departments (Espe, 2016)
- Tailor outreach to local academic culture & community (Pasek, 2015)
- Basis for marketing library resources - make library resources more visible
- Archives
 - Assist in the identification & acquisition of collections
 - Advocate for material donations (Totleben & Birrell, 2016)
- Acknowledgement faculty research, grants, and awards
- Awareness of program changes in the departments & programs
- Meet faculty in formal & informal settings, especially face-to-face (Pasek 2015)
- Work with collection management colleagues to ensure that resources for specialty subjects areas are being met

Current Liaison Engagement – The Learning Business

- Information literacy & research skill programs
- Provide specialized information assistance to faculty & students at all levels
- Develop an understanding of research methods in assigned disciplines
- Embedded librarian in all its forms, at the point-of-need - e.g., online, group consultations
- Support faculty & student research

Skills Needed by Librarians for These New Roles

“Chance Favors the Prepared Mind” - Louis Pasteur

- Nimble & flexible
- “Stem cell librarians” – ability to grow & change into whatever is needed in response to changing user needs
- Empathetic – listen to community and be aware of their “pain points”, e.g., copyright, publishing
- Reinvent reference and one-shot instruction sessions (Bakkalasi, et al, 2016)
- Project management
- Data literacy
- Scholarly communication knowledge & skills

Emerging Roles – Marketing

Ambassador to the Library

- Proactive in promoting library resources to faculty & students
- Educate users re: the depth and breadth of library resources and their value over Google Scholar and other freely available web resources
- Attend liaison department activities, e.g., faculty searches
- Become involved in university-level committees

(Thull & Hansen, 2009)

Emerging - Marketing

Meeting the Needs of Your Community

- Determine your community's needs & wants
- Create a strategic marketing plan with goals, a set of objectives, and a timeline
- Use less email blasts and greater targeting of emails to specific users
- “The Constant Liaison”
- Elevator Speech - be prepared to tell everyone, in 60 seconds, what you & the library can do for them

(Espe, 2016)

Emerging Roles – Scholarly Research & Scholarly Communication Support

- Educate the classroom faculty regarding:
 - *Open access books & journals
 - OA movement & its philosophy
 - Publishing models
 - *Scholarly impact metrics
 - *Authors' Rights
 - Creative Commons licensing
 - Copyright & fair use
 - Institutional repositories
 - Database alerts & citation management
 - The serials crisis

Emerging Roles – Scholarly Research & Scholarly Communication Support

Engagement Opportunities

- Recruit content for institutional repositories (Totleben & Birrell, 2016)
- Making tenure & promotion decisions more informed - present real measures of impact
- Create a current inventory of the university's scholarly output

(Lankes, 2016)

Emerging Roles – Data Literacy & Curation

■ Definition

- the ability to use, understand, and manage data
- the ability to access, assess, manipulate, summarize, and present data

■ Problem - absence of knowledge & training

- Faculty assume students already have learned & been exposed to data management
- Lack of formal training for students working with data

- Funders require that data management plans that detail how data will be described, secured, stored & curated

(Wright, Laurensen, & de Waard, 2016)

Emerging Roles – Data Literacy & Curation

Engagement Opportunities

- Liaison advise faculty on personal data information management
- Archivist can advise on file naming, file format, digital preservation
- Create a course and teach data management

(Totleben & Birrell, 2016)

Emerging Roles - Partnerships

Engagement Opportunities

- Makerspaces
- Alternatives to textbooks experts
 - <http://guides.emich.edu/texts>
- Attendance at:
 - capstone project presentations
 - poster sessions
 - graduate & undergraduate symposia
- Teach workshops in faculty resource centers
- Partnering in faculty research, e.g., co-authoring articles (Bakkalbasi, et al, 2016)

Questions & Contact Information

- Questions?

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