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

ELIZABETH BUCCIARELLI, EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
MICHIGAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE, ARTS, AND LETTERS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
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CREATIVE COMMONS - BY NC SA
Team leader for ~ 8 years

Micah Vandegrift in the journal, “In the Library with the Lead Pipe” from 2012; admonishment / kick in the pants

Rallying cry to dive in
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
  - Selector somewhat disconnected from issues of the academic departments

- Focused on building of a “core collection”, but with an evolution towards the recognition that subject specific resources were needed

- Beginning of interlibrary cooperation to build collections

Evan Ira Farber, in the book The Academic Library: Essays in Honor of Guy R. Lyle)

- 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

(Fohr & Wahl, 1974)
Biologist working with a political scientists

Email, chat, listservs

Pushing boundaries

NIH & NSF “Public Access Policy”
Examples of current “core” liaison engagements

No judgement – in some schools these will be core engagements, but in others, emerging activities

Depends on:

- the culture of the college, university, or department/program

- size and type of the school

- personalities involved
**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

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- Emerging

- depends on the culture, size, mission of school or department
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 “triplarite model” i.e., collection, reference, instruction, is replaced by the “engagement model”

(Totleben & Doell, 2016)

- Requires time & freedom to work with patrons

Change over last 4-5 years


purports that librarians should **advocate and enable far-reaching change in an exciting way**

Kristen Totleben 2016 – Collaborating for Impact

Community input informs collection, reference, and instruction
Current Liaison Engagement – Philosophy

- Recreating our duties
- 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)
“People learn from conversation”, Gordon Pask created this “Conversation Theory” “proactively speed the academic conversation”

Although I’ve categorized these activities into “Current” and “Emerging” trends in liaison work, some libraries may have adopted some of the emerging activities while not embracing all of the activities in the “current” category

All depends on the focus of the library and its mission
Of course many of these activities could be placed in multiple categories
Current Liaison Engagement—The Conversation Business

- Active outreach vs. passive assistance (Lassk, 2016)
- Meet patrons where they work, in dorms, online, offices, labs, departments (Ripa, 2014)
- Tailor outreach to local academic culture & community (Lassk, 2015)
- Basis for marketing, library resources - make library resources more visible

- Archives
  - Assist in the identification & acquisition of collections
  - Advocate for material donations (Falishek & Bimel, 2006)

- Acknowledgement faculty research, grants, and awards

- Awareness of program changes in the departments & programs

- Meet faculty in formal & informal settings, especially face-to-face (Lassk 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

Develop an understanding of research methods in assigned disciplines
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
- Project management
- Data literacy
- Scholarly communication knowledge & skills

Need the “eyes to see & recognize these opportunities”

“pain points” for College of Health & Human Services

Special libraries have always understood how to:

- align with their communities
- locate their expertise at the point-of-need

Theory, personnel and software
“If liaisons do not take the initiative to reach these patrons they will satisfy their needs elsewhere” (Thull, 531)
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 LISian”

“Elevator Speech - be prepared to tell everyone, in 60 seconds, what you & the library can do for them”
(Fisc, 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
  (Tortibien & Bihell, 2016)

- Making tenure & promotion decisions more informed
  present real measures of impact

- Create a current inventory of the university’s scholarly output
  (Jaakke, 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**

*(Delight, Samostein, & de Waard, NIH)*

NIH Public Access Policy
New university-wide committee on “Research Design and Analysis and Support Committee” from EMU’s Office of Research Development
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, 2015)

ask to be invited to graduate & undergraduate symposiums
Questions & Contact Information

- Questions?

- Elizabeth Bucciarelli
  ebucciare@emich.edu
  34487/250b

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References


References


Van der Brugge, S. (2013). What's a library without where is it the value of the library in the campus community.


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