

A REVAMPED MENU FOR INFORMATION LITERACY INSTRUCTION: CATERING TO NEWLY ADMITTED DOCTORAL STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

A review of the library literature has uncovered very little research about effective instruction for newly admitted university doctoral students. Library instruction for these students is mainly focused on workshops for conducting a literature review. This assistance is relevant later in their studies, when they are publishing journal articles and writing a dissertation proposal, but doctoral students also have unique needs their first year, when they are adjusting to the program demands and preparing for comprehensive exams.

Faculty buy-in and enthusiasm were the most important factors for getting approval from my department in the spring of 2011 to develop an information literacy series for first year doctoral students in the Broad College of Business (COB) at Michigan State University. The support I had from the Senior Associate Dean, individual faculty members, and in particular faculty serving on the Doctoral Program Committee was positive right from the start and unwavering. Not only did they provide information about the student skills' gap, but they also strongly encouraged attendance at the sessions.

INFORMATION LITERACY SERIES

The preparation for the series was extensive. Developing the content and format took the most time. To get information about specific student needs, I interviewed faculty and a fifth year doctoral student. The most important outcome

they identified was for students to adopt a citation management system early in the program to organize article citations, notes, analyses, and important quotations. The fifth year student was very candid about why it would have been helpful to have such a system in place when he started the program. Advanced searching and article alerts from A-list journals were suggested as the second most important series outcome.

After developing the content, I had to identify and instruct speakers for the sessions. In addition, there were many more behind the scenes tasks to complete, including getting a list of incoming students from the College; writing a marketing plan for attendance; developing handouts; designing custom name tags and folders; collecting library tchotchkes; and providing refreshments. It was decided that all of the sessions would be held at the Broad COB complex, mainly due to space considerations. Descriptions of the three sessions held during the 2011-2012 academic year are below:

September 2011 Presentation: Introduction to Library Resources

The first session was a panel presentation to introduce myself and three colleagues from the Gast Business Library. We each had a speaking part, which included an overview of the Michigan State University Libraries, our Branch Library resources, and specialized resources only available to faculty and doctoral students. We included a special appearance by a fifth year doctoral student presenting 'If I Knew Then What I Know Now.' His talk mainly centered on the importance of setting up a citation management system right away, but he also added some additional tips he learned on his journey. We concluded the session walking across the street for a library tour.

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Session Handouts:

- Subject specialist business cards
- A handout titled “Resources and Services for PhD students”
- A handout describing additional resources for the COB faculty and doctoral students
- An article titled “How to Read a Research Report”
- A flyer advertising free library workshops for various citation management software and tools
- Many of the session handouts are available at this link: http://libguides.lib.msu.edu/cob_phd

January 2012 Presentation: Advanced Searching and Journal Alerts

Five librarians made presentations: myself, a Business Library colleague, and three interdisciplinary librarians from the Main Library. First we distributed a chart comparing the features of three different business databases and Google Scholar. Next, my colleague and I demonstrated advanced search skills and alert features for two of our largest business article databases. To conclude the session, the three interdisciplinary librarians from the Main Library gave short presentations on their areas of expertise, which include government documents, data services, psychology, and sociology. This session generated many questions and discussions.

Session Handouts:

- Comparison chart of business databases and Google Scholar
- Advanced search tutorials for our largest article databases

March 2012 Presentation: Citation Management Tools

Two doctoral students and one librarian from the Main Library presented how they use various bibliographic management tools to organize their research and format their references for publication. This session served as an introduction to the main features of different tools as well as their pros and cons. At the end of the session, we invited participants to attend our scheduled library workshops for in-depth training.

Session Handouts:

- Comparison chart of various citation management tools
- Citation management tutorials (the ones we distribute in our workshops).

ASSESSMENT AND FUTURE PLANS

The information literacy series was not based on a model, but rather it was planned and produced based on the expressed needs of the faculty and students in the Business College. We have some formative assessment data - the students are requesting more active learning components such as leading them through tutorials. It is clear that the traditional style of the librarian as lecturer is not effective with this category of students. The librarian as a facilitator of knowledge, however, is an effective model. We observed the most stimulating discussions arose from the students' discussions with each other about their work methods and tips related to the session topic. In addition, although originally planned for new students, the sessions attracted students further along in the program. This suggests a host of opportunities for academic librarians and an added benefit is that the natural progression of conversations may lead to future learning opportunities. For example, during the third session a third year doctoral student commented that he successfully used a tool he learned from the literature to memorize information and pass his comprehensive exams. His comments peaked interest and he has agreed to lead a future session.

We have discussed summative assessment, but to date have not made concrete plans to conduct a research study to measure student success, retention, or any other benefit from the library instruction. We did see student engagement with librarians increase this year. My reference/research requests from the Broad COB doctoral students rose 450 % from the spring of 2011 to spring of 2012. Overall, the series was well received and praised by doctoral students, faculty and the Senior Associate Dean and we have an agreement to continue with a new group of doctoral students in fall 2012.