Librarian/Teacher Partnerships for Better Library Instruction: Two Views

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The importance of integrating library instruction into students' learning experiences has been stated many times in the library instruction literature. Attempts at integrating library instruction into the curriculum have convinced many librarians that they must take new, more active roles in communicating and closely cooperating with teaching faculty who control students' classroom experiences. To be effective, we must not only convince ourselves of the importance of library instruction; we must also convince classroom instructors. Librarians' attempts to market library instruction to faculty members have met with mixed successes. This article describes the "marketing" approaches and viewpoints taken by an Indiana school librarian and an Indiana academic librarian.

The View from a School Librarian

Freda Kegley

A successful library is not measured by a large inventory count, but the use that is made of the materials it contains. Elementary students are often scheduled for regular library classes, where the librarian can teach skills and expand the classroom curriculum through directed exploration. If the librarian knows the elementary school curriculum well, library skills integration can be done without the help of the teachers. However, at the junior high and senior high school levels, the librarian may no longer have regular specific class time to expand student research skills or stimulate intellectual curiosity. Therefore, the secondary school librarian must effectively solicit teacher assignments that require use of the library's resources and thereby continue the development of research skills in students.

Reach Students Through Teachers

Each librarian must make a commitment to reach students through the teachers. Techniques used will, of course, be based on the librarian's personality, enthusiasm, and level of commitment to the importance of the library in the learning process. Reaching all subject areas represented in the curiculum requires an individualized approach with each teacher. The librarian should become a part of teacher/student conversations about classroom activities. The librarian should gather personal interest items and use displays in hallways. These are all ways of learning about the curriculum and

individual teachers' approaches to teaching.

Send memos! Reach teachers with memos about general interest items. Keep in mind that the most effective memos include personal notes attached to them. These personal notes can alert teachers to anything from current magazine articles, to new materials, to reminders about little-used materials. General memos should be spaced at regular intervals. Important information needed between memo should be sent by personal note or direct contact with the teacher.

Another way to help teachers make more efficient use of the library is to send them a monthly calendar. The calendar could include birthdays of famous people in various curriculum areas, historical events, national holidays, and recognition weeks. These monthly calendars should not be designed as a school events calendar, but as a curriculum enhancement tool. These calendars could be posted for student information as well.

Librarians can demonstrate interest in the curriculum more directly by serving on a textbook adoption committee. If it is not possible to serve on a committee, secure copies of currently adopted textbooks as soon as possible. By using the tables of contents as guides, specialized bibliographies (e.g., an audiovisual resources list) could be developed for use along with the textbook. In such a specialized bibliography, library resources could be organized chapter by chapter. What better way to greet teachers in the fall than to have library materials accessible by textbook chapter in their particuar subject areas! Further, such a service provides the librarian with a productive way of identifying gaps in the library collection.

Working WITH Teachers, not FOR Teachers

At first glance, it might appear that the librarian is working "for" the teacher. This often lures a teacher to begin supporting the library and working "with" the librarian. Project planning becomes a joint effort. Teacher/librarian cooperation can also extend itself beyond an isolated library lesson for a specific class. Cooperative efforts can also benefit a wider segment of the school population. For example, the need for consistency among subject departments in bibliographic citation form is not an uncommon problem in schools and sometimes causes frustration in the library—not only for the librarian, but also for the students. In this instance, the librarian could work to facilitate cooperation between teachers. The English teachers could establish a standard bibliographic form in cooperation with teachers from other subject departments. The advantages of a standardized school bibliographic form are obvious— students can learn one way of citation and it will serve them in all areas of the curriculum, and any teacher can help any student on a bibliography and know the effort will be accepted by fellow teachers.

Librarians can make a difference in all areas of education. They must find their inroads into the classrooms by selling library resources in innovative ways. Once teachers begin to view the library as an integral part of the curriculum, the library will truly become an essential element of each student's education.

The View from an Academic Librarian

Julie Bobay

Around the country, academic librarians have reported puzzlement over low attendance at such programs as term paper workshops, credit courses in library skills and library tours. The low attendance was especially difficult to understand given an obvious need for the information by many student. Many librarians assumed their publicity was not adequate, and changed the color of announcements, methods of distribution, and scheduling. Often these changes made no difference, and many programs have been dropped.

Marketing Library Services

These anomalies have sparked several good articles about librarians' failure to apply sound marketing principles to library programs. We've often violated a fundamental marketing principle: clearly define an audience with demonstrated needs BEFORE designing the program. To define an audience, we must gather real data, not subjective anecdotal perceptions gained through our contacts with a small fraction of the student body over the reference desk.

Not many librarians have gathered objective data on students' needs for library instruction. There are many reasons for this, not the least of which is the time demanded to collect this type of data. However, I believe the real explanation for skipping the data collection step is that we believe that we know students' needs. We pay dearly for this belief with repeated "errors" in the "trial and error" approach to program planning. The price we pay comes in the form of wasted resources and librarians' frustration over poorly-attended programs.

Programs offered to such broadly-defined groups as "freshmen writing terms papers" are a good example of this mistake. After explaining how to find an article on a topic for the 250th time at the reference desk, we plan, publicize and offer several sections of a Term Paper Workshop which covers that skill, yet nobody comes. Why not? Perhaps because students don't want to know 'library skills"; perhaps they only want to know how to accomplish *their assignment* for a particular class.

Integrated Library Instruction

This leads me to believe in the importance of integrating library instruction into the academic environment in which students operate. A challenge posed by this integration is that it removes complete control for library instruction from librarians. It forces us into the new role of convincing teaching faculty that we, as librarians, can and should work with the teaching faculty to achieve effective library skills instruction. Classroom faculty must be as commited to this goal as we are, and we must take responsibility for showing them the importance of this partnership. This is not a novel idea—Evan Farber of Earlham College, Bibliographic Instruction Librarian of the Year for 1987, has been advocating this approach for years.

Indiana University is different from Earlham College in many respects, especially in size. When I became Instruction Librarian at IU-Bloomington, with a student population of over 30,000 and a teaching faculty of almost 1500, I was considerably intimidated and somewhat distressed when I heard people talk about the importance of integrating library instruction into the curriculum. In scope, the task seemed comparable to the preservation challenges facing

libraries with huge, disintegrating collections.

However, after experiencing first-hand a few notable failures of the "Term Paper Workshop" variety, I became more open to the idea of course-integrated instruction on a large scale. This is the approach taken quite successfully at both Ohio State and Illinois, and although each institution seems to have found different programs that work best for them, I thought we should be searching for one that would work at IU-Bloomington.

English Composition Program

After reaching consensus on the importance of course-integrated instruction, the IU-B Libraries decided in 1985 that we could best deliver effective introductory library instruction through the mandatory Elementary Composition course. The English Department at Indiana University-Bloomington offers approximately 160 sections of W131, Elementary composition, per year, with 25 students per section. English instructors face several challenges in teaching writing skills, including motivating students who are generally uninterested in writing without recourse to a subject matter which might interest them, and reliance on a large corps of English graduate students to teach all the sections.

For years, the Libraries had been offering a library tour to all W131 instructors who requested one. Over time, librarians and instructors became dissatisfied with the tours. There was insufficient time to do a tour of the large building and give any meaningful instruction. Instruction given on tours was difficult to hear and students were embarrassed to be seen by their friends on a library tour.

There was no opportunity for practice with basic tools. Librarians were "burnt-out" after giving hundreds of identical tours. However, instructors still called in large numbers to arrange tours; evidently it was their best option.

The Libraries approached the English Department with a proposal to prepare a program to teach basic skills in library use (card catalog, periodical indexes and newspaper indexes.) The program would no longer include a guided library tour; a self-guided tour was made available and the class presentation was built on the premise that students had completed the tour. The precious 50-minute class period would be used for library instruction.

Implementation and Evaluation

The English Department's Composition Committee agreed to provide advice to the librarians who would develop the lesson. They confirmed an emphasis on periodical indexes and suggested the lesson be made concrete. In order to collect information from the instructors themselves, the Libraries sent a questionnaire to all W131 instructors who had brought a class to the Libraries the previous semester. Based on information from the Committee and the instructors, the Libraries developed a slide program, narrated by a librarian, which included in-class exercises using quarterly issues of Wilson indexes. This program met the marketing precept of defining an audience and developing a service designed to meet needs of those individuals.

Another critical part of a successful marketing program is evaluation. To try to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, the libraries sent questionnaires to all instructors and students

who had experienced it. From those questionnaires, we learned that the lesson helped make a complicated process less complicated, and even students who complained that the session was "boring" and "told us a lot of stuff we already knew" recommended that all W131 classes should have the lesson.

In spite of some ambiguous and somewhat mysterious results, we did identify several clear reactions to our program. We learned that the self-guided tour was not effective, the lesson was too passive and did not engage the attention of students, the lesson covered too many concepts in too short a time, and the inclass exercise was not a real enough experience to be completely effective.

Computer-Based Library Instruction

Based on that feedback, we are in the midst of two concurrent projects. First, we have changed the program to a 15-minute slide show concerning the choice and use of a periodical index, with the remaining 35 minutes devoted to an in-library exercise using library materials. Second, we are co-developing, with English faculty and an Instructional Designer, a computer-based lesson for W131. This computer lesson will be a part of a library skills package consistion of the lesson, an informational packet for W131 instructors discussing ways to integrate the lesson into their course, and a follow-up in-library exercise based on the computer lesson. We hope to implement this program in Fall 1988.

Now, with the benefit of hindsight, it seems clear that the process of delivering effective course-integrated library instruction began with the first initiatives of librarians to become a part of the learning environment of the university. After many starts and stops, we have continued to build a sense of partnership with the English faculty to provide basic library instruction. Even though each interation of the library instruction component causes new realizations of shortcomings, we can see progress over time. We are very optimistic about capitalizing on the relationship we are building with the English Department faculty in providing library instruction.