

Course-Integrated Library Instruction: Earlham College Revisited

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On March 14, 1988, I visited Earlham College, home of one of the most well-documented programs of course-integrated library instruction in the country. As one of four librarians visiting Earlham's Library that day, I met with Evan Farber, Director and originator of the instruction program, and Nancy Taylor and James Kennedy, reference librarians long involved with this course-integrated approach to library instruction. Mr. Farber's and others' remarks were taped at an informal round table discussion, where we were given an overview of the program and supporting handouts, and an afternoon session which consisted, in part, of an informal question-and-answer period. This article shares with *Indiana Libraries* readers the salient points of the day: **Farber (Evan Farber)**, **Taylor (Nancy Taylor)**, **Kennedy (James Kennedy)**, **MM (author)**, **Davis (Fran Davis, Owensboro, Ky, Junior College)**, and **Moore (Joyce Moore, Jefferson Community College, Louisville, KY)**. All remarks are verbatim unless edited for the purposes of clarification; edited areas are indicated with brackets.

From the Morning Round- Table Discussion

Farber: One of the premises we start off with is that students don't like libraries . . . because they don't feel comfortable. An article in *College and Research Libraries* on "Library anxiety",¹ reported on a study done at East Carolina University where students kept a journal of their library experiences; freshmen used such words as "scared", "uneasy", all kinds of things reflecting anxiety . . . when people feel anxious about a situation, they avoid it . . . Certainly the territory is unfamiliar, and because they don't feel in control of it they avoid it. And they can avoid it, unless they're forced to use it. But even for those freshmen who like libraries or feel relatively comfortable because they've had good experiences, they don't know how to use it very well. They know how to use their own libraries, perhaps, that is, the high school libraries, but they come into a college library and they see the *Reader's Guide* and the card catalog, and they say, 'well, I know how to use these things, and that's all I need', and they never go beyond those. And they don't need to, in many cases, unless their assignments force them to do that kind of thing. Even here, students will still

use the card catalog and the *Reader's Guide* and go back to that high school syndrome.

Most faculty assignments do not make good use of the library; unless the faculty are educated to it, most assignments are trivial or unreasonable or confusing . . . or have [out-of-date or erroneous] bibliographies.

MM: The ever popular scavenger hunt. . .

Farber: Yes, where the faculty really think they're helping the library, 'we're making the students do things that are interesting' . . . It's often frustrating for students and really doesn't teach them anything except . . . well, I don't know what it teaches them, except that maybe they can only find things in the library by hit-or-miss.

So there are these various reasons that we think it's important to have a program that teaches students how to use the library that involves working with the faculty. Our program has a couple of basic thrusts to it. First, it's a course integrated program; that is, a program where we do not teach students to use the library outside of courses . . . we only work through courses that are already in place. One reason, not the best one, to be sure, but perhaps one of the most practical, is that politically it makes sense to do this. That is, the courses are already in place, you don't have to fight with the curriculum committee. The curriculum—if you want to look at it as a pie, everybody gets a piece of the pie, the English department, the science people. . . and if you're going to want a piece of that pie for the library, you're interested in taking somebody else's piece. So it becomes a political issue . . . fighting for some of the turf and that's not a very wise thing to do; not only unwise, sometimes it has no

results because librarians don't have a lot of political power.

So politically it makes sense to work through the courses. But even if it weren't expedient to do this, probably educationally it makes sense . . . students are not interested in learning how to find information. You're not really interested in learning how to use a library until you need it . . . it's not inherently interesting. You have to create that interest by catching them through an assignment, or by piggy-backing it through an assignment. Those are the things students are interested in: getting better grades and saving time. If you can make learning how to use the library part of the assignment, then students will learn how to use it.

Major Aspects of Earlham's Program

Course-integration is a basic part of our program. It's either course-related or course-integrated. I use those terms, they're not quite synonymous. Course-related means the assignment has something to do with the course assignment; course-integrated means that the assignment really becomes built into the course and is actually an inherent part of the course. In either case, with students it's become an expectation that if they have any kind of library assignment, one of [the librarians] is going to come into the classroom, or they're going to come in here and we're going to teach them particular sources. Sometimes even without faculty members requesting it, the students will say 'when is the library going to do this?'; and even say to faculty at times, 'hey, we ought to go over to the library or have Nancy or Evan come over and talk to us.'

A real benefit [of a classroom session on library use], aside from teaching students how to use the

library, is that it makes the students feel as though the library and the librarians are really part of what they're here for. In other words, they're here to learn and the librarians are part of that program. We are another aspect of their education. I think it makes a difference in the way they view the library. [There is] a very different attitude here, than, I think, in most places. There is a rapport between us and the students.

Another aspect of our program is that it is a structured program. It begins right at the beginning of the students' [college] careers, before the students begin courses. In a sense, students' library skills parallel their development throughout their four years here. . . . By and large, our students are very good at using the library and in some areas, particularly in biology and psychology, are really quite independent at tackling almost any topic in those areas.

The third aspect of the program is that it needs cooperation . . . cooperating with faculty members, in planning assignments, in implementing assignments, in all aspects of library work. Even planning courses sometimes, changing the way a course is structured.

MM: Do you get to do that?

Farber: Not often. In most cases, the faculty has an assignment in mind and will come in and talk about it. But there have been times when the nature of a course has changed.

The political science American government class is the best example. The whole course is built around students, freshmen really, learning how to find and use government documents, and that course was planned with bibliographic instruction in mind.

Those are some of the characteristics of the program. I want to say this,

also, keep in mind that this program has been going for more than 20 years. So it's a program [with which] we've had lots of experience . . . and opportunities to develop and perfect, particularly to perfect the organization

Let me backtrack a moment to say one thing about course-related instruction [being] preferable to other types of library instruction in its flexibility; we can take assignment; we can do it very quickly. Whereas with a workbook, for example, it's not that easy to change. When a new reference work comes out, we can immediately incorporate it into the new assignment. If the nature of the assignment changes we can adapt it to, say, a full class, an hour's lecture, or we can make it a ten-minute lecture. We can adapt it to beginning students or upperclass students, even within a class where there's a mixed group . . . We can adapt the assignment to meet the needs of all those students in a variety of ways, meeting part of them one time and meeting the whole class later on . . . It [course-related instruction] is much more flexible than any other kind of approach.

MM: Do you find that some of the new faculty coming in have already heard about this and are expecting and are willing to work with it?

Farber: When new faculty are interviewed here, almost always one of us or the science librarian serve as part of the interviewing situation, that is . . . they'll put us on the agenda. So they've already met one of us and know something about the program. In faculty orientations, when new faculty are all together before school begins, I always talk to them a little bit about the library.

Most of [the library instruction] takes place after their courses begin, that is, within the department. If someone comes in to teach psychology,

or biology, especially, they almost naturally will talk to their colleagues about some library component and then, after their courses are set and announced, one of us will get in touch with the faculty. [For example, in our contact we might begin with something like.] 'I see you're teaching 19th century literature this term; what are you planning to do in terms of the library?'

Taylor: Or, 'will there be some sort of research component,' something like that.

MM: Some people in our English department would be glad to hear from our library instruction office while others would ask, 'Why are you asking me about my course? This is my class'.

Farber: I would ask the question in another way, if you're expecting that kind of response. I would say, 'are you doing anything in terms of the library? As students going to be using the library at all?' I don't see how anyone could take offense at that. They'll say, 'yeah, why don't you put some books on reserve' probably. But once you get your foot in the door that way, then you can open it up a little more and say; 'are they going to be using any library materials, are they going to be doing any papers or any kind of assignment, or doing any kind of research?'

Davis: Would you pick a faculty member who is willing to work with you and then let him be a salesman for you?

Farber: My general advice is to work on individuals, individuals you know who are open, innovative, who are not defensive, and for one reason or another, whom you feel comfortable in approaching. Some faculty who use the library a lot feel that if they know how to use the library, their students

know how to use the library. And if their students need to know how to use it, they'll tell them. So it's really a matter of personality, openness.

Later on, the best way [to determine the need for contacting a faculty member], is feedback from the reference desk. That is, a student coming in and asking questions, because they have a demonstrated need. You can call your faculty member and say, 'Last night some of your students came in' . . . you have to be careful because faculty members could take it very personally and immediately become defensive . . . but a faculty member who is really interested in teaching can recognize that their students are having a tough time and you can help. Another way is not to suggest, necessarily, a whole hour of library instruction. It may be, that the faculty member has the whole term laid out and doesn't want to give up a whole hour. 'Can I come in for just a few minutes and hand out some material and talk a little bit?'

The Library Use Quiz³

Farber: The Library Use Quiz [is] given during the orientation period. It's a very simple test, refined over the years. The assumption is that any student who has gone through a decent high school and been taught the library ought to be able to pass this test. When we talk to them later on in a class and say, 'you know how to use the *Reader's Guide*, don't you?', we want them to understand what we're comparing the current course content to (such as *Social Science Index*, etc.)

Ninety percent of our students pass this test . . . our entering classes are about 300, so about 30 students every year don't pass this test. [The test] is given to them on, say a Thursday afternoon; by Thursday evening we

have graded the test and identified those students who haven't passed. A note is put in their box the next day saying they haven't passed the test and that they should come into the library to get some instruction. [There is a set of "make-up" exercises to do then, often administered by student assistants.]

MM: This is totally optional?

Farber: . . . How many respond to that first note?

Kennedy: About half.

Farber: We follow up with maybe a second note, a note to their advisers, a note to every person who's taking the Humanities course, the Humanities instructors, a whole variety of things to get them to come in.

Kennedy: We also have our student assistants call them on the phone, and sometimes we just have to write them off . . .

Farber: This all happens before the term begins.

Humanities I³

Farber: We are in a quarter system. Humanities I, II, and III are the only courses that all students take. [The purpose is] to teach students to read intelligently, to write, and to discuss. They write very short reaction papers just using the text and correcting each other's papers. The students are reading about a book a week for 10 weeks and those books range widely in nature.

Halfway through the course is a week during which they're supposed to have no readings, and that is the week that we give them their library instruction. Now, this is the one class where what I said earlier doesn't pertain, when I said that all our instruction is course-related or course-

integrated. This course has no specific library assignment. Students are not supposed to use secondary sources. But historically instructors of this course thought it important for students to be introduced to the library their first term here.

It was up to us to design a project that would introduce students to the library . . . [The Humanities I assignment is a booklet entitled, "Search Strategy and Reference Sources", and covers finding background information on a topic, using subject headings, finding bibliographies, using the Reference Keyword Index (discussed below) and the card catalog, finding reviews and using periodical indexes. On the cover of each booklet is attached a list of three topics with which to work through the different sections of the exercise booklet.] We choose about 30-40 topics, related in one way or another to something the students will have read.

Taylor: The topics are researched ahead of time by library staff so we know they'll be successful . . . we tried one year to have the instructors choose the topics; they chose topics which they thought were researchable, but were not. The idea is to have the students research the topics so they'll have success with them.

Farber: Nancy or I meet these classes and talk about the purpose of the assignment [which is] to teach them how to use the library, to save them time . . . our lecture consists of discussing each section of the exercise booklet, justifying why each of the sections is important.

The Keyword Index²

One of the most interesting discoveries at Earlham college was the library's Keyword Index, which lists almost everything in Reference. It is updated twice a year, but may soon be

updated every term. It's enormously helpful in updating the many bibliographies the Reference staff has developed. Farber almost never uses the card catalog for reference anymore. The Keyword Index was developed by Earlham's computer center from the reference shelflist. Listings are arranged by significant words in the reference sources' titles. It has been found by the reference staff and by library users that it is often easier to refer to the Keyword Index to identify reference books on a topic than to use the subject card catalog.

"Golden Treasures"³

The Reference Department maintains a collection of hundreds of research guides/bibliographies (humorously referred to as their "Golden Treasures", the color of the first page being gold); about seventy to ninety are revised or created each year, via a personal computer. As new reference materials are acquired, a citation is added to each pertinent bibliography so that preparing the new editions can be done quickly. These bibliographies include annotations to reference works, lists of related periodicals and available indexes, and, when appropriate, information on various CD-ROM indexes, e.g., *ERIC Silverplatter*, *Psychlit*, *Sociofile*, etc.

Questions and Answers in the Afternoon

The group viewed portions of video tapes from Earlham's BI Workshops, including one in which a professor from the Biology Department at Ohio State University discussed a course-integrated program created by him and Virginia Tiefel following their attendance at an Earlham workshop.

MM: How often do faculty come with the librarians to your various workshops? One of the things I'm always contending is that we librari-

ans are always talking to librarians. We need to talk to the faculty.

Farber: That was one of the reasons we began our workshops. They were not just for librarians. We tried to make them attractive by offering reduced rates for faculty and we had a grant for several years to underwrite the expenses. In all of the workshops we've held, more than half of the audience has been faculty.

MM: I would say that the Ohio State professor came along with Virginia and then became inspired. Did she have an ulterior motive, thinking this would get him inspired?

Farber: Sure . . . it had repercussions way beyond what she initially expected. After they went back [to their schools], Virginia started having her own workshops. Several times a year she will invite perhaps fifty faculty members with whom she's not had much contact in the library and have three or four faculty members who have been converted testify to [the success of the program].

Our workshops are limited to about fifty, primarily because of the facilities, but we also have a chance to get to know each other in the day-and-a-half.

MM: In February, you had your Eckard College-Earlham College Workshop. Is that a regular event?

Farber: Every other year.

MM: Is there a particular theme to those conferences?

Farber: It's the same idea: bibliographic instruction, although at one we talked a lot more about CD-ROM's. We use faculty to talk about what they've done.

MM: Besides Ohio State, what other universities can you think of that have gone back and really gotten

converts to this course-integration approach?

Farber: The University of Wisconsin-Parkside. . . a lot of places do a little bit . . . Bowling Green [State University] does . . .

Kennedy: UCLA?

Farber: Not much anymore . . . I know several smaller schools in California that do a fair amount.

Davis: Have you thought about any way of integrating computer-assisted instruction with this? Maybe as a reinforcement to what you've done.

Farber: I don't know of anybody that's really done very much. Years ago the University of Denver did some at a very elementary level but they don't do it anymore.

Taylor: Unless it's very sophisticated computer work, it's not going to measure up to a person being able to respond to a question in a class . . . at least when a human being comes to talk to you, you [can] then identify that human being the next time you walk into the library.

MM: When you go to the classes, do they immediately have to begin working on the different assignments?

Farber: It's often a problem . . . [we tell the instructors that the] instruction we've given is not going to be nearly as effective unless it's implemented almost immediately thereafter. Instructors don't really seem to take that seriously . . . the students, too often, don't begin their work right after instruction.

MM: I see each of your handouts has a place where the due date is entered. Do you set those due dates?

Farber: The faculty set them . . . [but] we set the Humanities due date

for about 10 days after we give it to them.

MM: How many students are going to be working on those Humanities I assignments at the same time?

Farber: The sections are about 20 apiece and several sections may be due the same day, and certainly they're all due within a week to 10 days.

MM: Do you have enough of the topics so that no students are working on the same topics?

Taylor: No, they do work on the same topics, but they don't need to check out books; they just need to identify materials, so if you can just get things back on the reference shelf, it isn't a problem.

MM: Do you see students working together? Do you mind that?

Farber: No . . . it's not a very difficult assignment. We tell them it's going to take them only an hour or two hours to do it. They could do it themselves in the same amount of time it would take to find out who else is doing their topic.

Taylor: I frequently have people come up and ask if they can work on it together. I think it's great; they can talk about what they're doing.

MM: Jim, you've been here about as long as Evan has. How long have you been here, Nancy?

Taylor: Seven Years.

MM: Did you do this type of approach where you were before?

Taylor: I was at the University of Wisconsin, and we were in the School of Education, so we worked with a lot of graduate students and the beginning level education students.

MM: In higher level courses at Earlham, are there any library requirements where the students will be coming back to you?

Taylor: Oh yes, in almost all of them. . .

MM: And do you find that most of the students have retained some of the information that they've gotten along the way?

Taylor: I think so.

Farber: Some; I keep saying that you can't expect them to remember individual works of reference . . . the most important thing is to change their attitude, and to get them to understand something about the nature of working with materials and particularly to feel comfortable about librarians, I mean, to feel good about asking for help. I think they do understand that there are indexes and abstracting services, there are certain kinds of reference works. . .

MM: Do you get students in on their own . . . who realize the value of what you are doing?

Farber: Not in every course, very few. In the American Government course Nancy mentioned earlier, the instructor is asked to put on his evaluation form something about the library assignment in the class. It's very "heavy" assignment; mostly freshmen are in the class, yet they've been taught to use CIS, the *Monthly Catalog*, all sorts of documents. A typical [student] response is, 'it was a heavy assignment, but I sure learned a lot'.

Taylor: That is a class where the assignment is so central. The professor doesn't lecture on the assignment except on the day we come to talk. The purpose of the assignment is to use primary documents to figure out what's going on in modern govern-

ment; and it's on the final. That's probably our best example [of course-integrated library instruction].

Farber: The Chemistry Department's comprehensive final for senior chemistry majors has a bibliographic question as one of the three questions.

Taylor: The students go to the library to do research to answer the question . . . which is actually true, in a different way with a lot of our departments. All the Biology Senior Seminars include library research; almost all our senior seminars include research.

MM: One thing I've discovered at Indiana State University is that most of the pure research courses are at the graduate level, and by the time the student gets into their research course, they *should* have (but haven't) gotten all of this information long before. For example, sometimes they're at a 600-level course before they really start using *Psychological Abstracts*.

Taylor: That was true in Wisconsin all the time. Students would be working on a Ph. D. in Education and had never heard of *ERIC*. They literally had never needed any kind of research before.

MM: We've seen from some of the handouts this morning part of the answer to this question, but how has technology changed what you do? Some of your handouts i.e. including Silverplatter.

Farber: It really hasn't changed anything else; I think it will. It may change the nature of assignments.

MM: Do you plan on having more CD-ROM stations?

Farber: Definitely.

MM: Do you ever have any workshops for the students outside of their classes at all? Any kind of 'come in and tour around the library . . .'?

Farber: No, everything we do is strictly in terms of the classes.

MM: Do you have anything just for the faculty, where you get the faculty together?

Farber: Years ago we did that . . . on a Saturday, 10-15 years ago, we offered free lunch. About 30 faculty attended, 6 who were using instruction already and talked about it.

MM: Have you not done anything with that now that you've got the CD-ROM, for example?

Kennedy: I think of CD-ROM as being an extension of periodical indexes and online searching, so when we're meeting classes—psychology, education, and so on—we'll be giving demonstrations of CD-ROM.

MM: For students or faculty?

Kennedy: These are for classes, so if the faculty is present, as I assume they would be, then, yes.

Farber: We have talked about getting a projector.

MM: Yes, we use one for online catalog instruction and we can use it for database instruction. We have a Sony projection unit and now we have a liquid crystal display.

Farber: They're expensive.

MM: Cheaper than you'd think. The LCD is much cheaper than the Sony was when the Sony was bought, but the Sony was state-of-the-art then. The LCD, I think, was \$1000, and it has some nice software, so we can download our screens.

Farber: How big is it?

MM: It looks like a thick clipboard which sets on top of a lower-than-standard wattage overhead projector; the lower wattage is necessary or your image gets hot during extended use and begins to fade away. However, many of the newest LCD models have built-in cooling fans reported to address the problem.

MM: Your freshmen quiz, do you have anything like that beyond the freshman year?

Farber: There's really no place to give it to them where we have them all together. The only other time they're all together is when they're taking the Humanities course and have no other library instruction for maybe a couple of years. You see what happens there, they come back in and it's like they've never been in a library before. And then there are students whose Humanities instruction is immediately followed up by two or three courses [that include instruction] that same term. That's one of the problems of this kind of instruction, is that there is no uniformity to it. It's a disadvantage in most ways, but it's never boring.

Concluding Thoughts

The course-integrated instruction program at Earlham is a good example of what can be accomplished in what one could describe as a laboratory atmosphere; twenty years ago Evan Farber and his colleagues began a program that continues to be a model. Academic libraries of all sizes need to continue to investigate the possibilities of increasing their work with faculty to achieve higher percentages of research-literate students. Farber has always emphasized that the Earlham program is not exportable in its entirety. But the underlying principles of communication with faculty, and of working closely with

them to make the instruction (and any subsequent library assignments) as meaningful as possible, are tenets which all instruction librarians need to consider in planning and implementing their various instructional programs.

Notes

¹Mellon Constance A. "Library Anxiety: A Grounded Theory and Its Development." *College and Research Libraries* 47 (2): 106-65, March, 1986.

²Farber, Evan I. "A Keyword Index to the Reference Collection." *American Libraries* 18:440-1, June, 1987.

³Those interested in seeing examples of the Humanities I exercise booklet, the Library Use Quiz, or one of the "Golden Treasures", and for more information on the BI program at Earlham and workshops sponsored by the Library, can write to Evan Farber, Lilly Library, Earlham College, Indiana, 47374.

For Further Reading about the Earlham Program

- Hart, James W. and Gwendolyn Stevens. *Can a Missouri State University Successfully Operate a course-Integrated bibliographic Instruction Program ?*, (ED 210024)
- Henning, Patricia A. and Mary E. Stillman, editors. *Integrating Library Instruction in the College Curriculum*. Philadelphia, Pa: Drexel University, Graduate School of Library Science, 1971 (ED 092150; reprint of article in *Drexel Library Quarterly* 7 (3/4), July & October, 1971)
- Kennedy, James R. et al. "Course-related Library Instruction; A Case Study of the English and Biology Departments at Earlham College." *Drexel Library Quarterly* 7 (3/4): 277-297, 1971.
- Penhale, Sara J. and Nancy Taylor. "Integrating End-user Searching into a Bibliographic Instruction Program." *RO* 27 (2): 212-20, Winter, 1986 (EJ 349552).
- Robinson, Dennis E. and Ernest C. Bolt, Jr. *Five-Year Report and Evaluation of the Library-Faculty Partnership Project: 1973-1978*. Virginia: Richmond University, [1980?] (ED 181865).
- Werking, Richard Hume. *The Library and the College: Some Programs of Library Instruction*, 1976 (ED 127917).
- "Alternatives to the Term Paper: A Variety of Library-based Assignments Used at Earlham College" (unpublished paper), Lilly Library, Earlham College, 1986.