The Embedded Library: a Marriage made in Heaven or in Hell?

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WHSL 1923 - 1964
WHSL 1964 -1982
Medical School, Parktown, Johannesburg
Embedded Librarianship

• “Widely used in the professional literature”
• Academic librarians teaching information literacy skills as part of formal curricula
• Special, research, academic librarians whose offices are moved from a central library to their customer groups, so that they can work more closely with the members of those groups
• Includes clinical medical librarians
• Definition: “Provide specialized services to specific groups”
Examples of Self-Assessment Questions:

- Provide training on information resources or information management tools away from library, such as in a customer’s office, a conference room, or classroom?
- Attend social events held by your customer group?
- Collaborate on/contribute to your customer group’s work?
- Attend meetings, classes, or conferences in your customers’ area of expertise (as opposed to LIS)?
Embeddedness Score

• Weighted score for each attribute
  – Frequently/Routine Practice
  – Occasionally/Not Routine Practice
  – Rarely/Never

• Scores:
  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highly Embedded</th>
<th>Building on Progress</th>
<th>Establishing Base</th>
<th>Starting Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 80-100</td>
<td>• 40-79</td>
<td>• 20-39</td>
<td>• 0-19</td>
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2010 Wits FHS Survey of GEMP Curriculum (MEd)

- 93.5% of academic staff felt that evidence-based IL should be incorporated into formal teaching for medical undergraduates.
- 69.4% felt that evidence-based IL teaching should be carried out *jointly* by medical practitioners, pre-clinical staff and librarians.
- Tensions reported in literature not apparent.
- Formal embedding of teaching
  - Led directly to change in status of librarian from 100% support services to 50% academic and 50% support.
  - Dual reporting roles.
LibGuides Software: Public Domain

- WHSL Teaching & Learning Guides
- WHSL Guides to e-Resources
  - Links to subscribed material requires authorisation and passwords
- Can be further embedded into LMS modules
LibGuides

- Has enabled the creation of content, sharing of knowledge and measurement of results
- WHSL LibGuides accessed 71559 times in 2012 (up 91.3 %)
- Marketing accomplished by word of mouth, training & wordplay
Physical Repurposing of WHSL: “Serendipity of Service”
WHSL & Faculty Systematic Review Teams

• Systematic reviews
  – Evidence-based practice in health care
  – Literature reviews focused on a research question
  – Identify, appraise, select & synthesize all high quality relevant research

• Include several methodological steps
  – Inter alia
  – Precise formulation of question
  – Identification of relevant databases
  – Efficient (& replicable) search strategies
• Concerned that current programmes depend too much on the excellence of individual librarians
  – Hire staff who can build relationships
  – Enable staff to learn about the parent organization and the subject domain of their customers
  – Empower staff to identify and offer the services that their customers need most
  – Build alliances and communicate effectively with customer managers
  – Support the embedded librarian’s work by offering central library support and by encouraging sharing
  – Promote embedded services
  – Systematically evaluate embedded services

Pros and Cons

Pros
• Professional status & visibility
  – Career paths
• Formal curriculum
  – Enhanced job satisfaction
• Training opportunities
  – ROI?
• Clearer vision of “core” business
• Increased use (stats)

Cons
• One person’s reputation & trust over twenty years
  – Sustainability?
• Exams!
  – More meetings, marking
• Staff quota & competencies
  – Increased staff training needs
• Library vs Faculty needs
• Time!
Evaluation

• “I used to walk past WHSL thinking that I would never need to go in there. Now WHSL has become my oyster.”
• “The website is superb, and will be the launch site for the student’s session work (as well as all future faculty EBM courses or sessions).”
A Marriage Made in Heaven or in Hell?

- Like any marriage, requires lots of compromise
- Both partners need to work at it
- Adaptability from both
- Willingness to change
- Wonderful at times; awful at others

WHSL is embedded in the Faculty of Health Sciences