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Library Integration through Collaboration: Partnering in the Course Development Process

by **Anita Norton** (Distance Education Librarian, Johns Hopkins University, Excelsior College)

Overview

Academic libraries are being encouraged more and more to find ways to be innovative to ensure usage of resources and services. It has become critical to our existence to define our role and bring awareness to how we serve the broader academic community. It has been determined by many librarians that collaboration with other areas of the academy is the key to continued usage and evolution of the library. At **Excelsior College Virtual Library (ECVL)** one of our paths is through course integration.

Libraries make large contributions to the colleges' academic programs with resource availability for the students, assistance with learning information seeking skills and at the same time assisting educators with resources for teaching and instruction. Librarians provide access to information and are the experts in information organization and retrieval with the ability to make the task of researching for both students and faculty, easier. So, it only seemed natural for the library to contribute to the course content and the course development process.

Identifying the Need

The ECVL's mission is to support the college as a world leader in distance education by providing the necessary tools for instruction and learning to contribute to student's success. We are a library system of only electronic resources, so transition into the online courses seemed likely for integration. Resources for the students research and study needs were made easily available bringing awareness to the library's offerings.

Our library has created a model for library integration. This process demonstrates how to maintain continued use of library services and resources in online courses. The value of the library became more apparent when working in conjunction with the academic units and other support services such as instructional designers. Through collaboration with stakeholders at the college, the library became active, essential partners in the online environment.

The librarians realized their responsibility to make the resources and services available to the college community to enhance student achievement. We took great pride in building relationships with the academic units to support the programs, making use of the resources throughout the college. We began building our relationships through liaison roles. Each librarian is responsible for sharing the discipline specific resources with the academic units and providing knowledge of the accessibility to the instructional designers and course developers/faculty. When new staff members join the



college the liaison librarian makes contact with that individual to make them aware of the library resources. This works as a marketing strategy to bring awareness to the library.

There was some usage of library resources integrated into courses by developers, however, it was recognized this was an area for building upon. There were requests at different points of need from the course developers. After many meetings and conversations with the academic administrators, we decided to execute a plan of action to increase usage of the resources by students and faculty, which would ultimately increase the request for services and raise visibility of the library. It was important for the librarians to emphasize the added value of the library to the college and contribute directly to student learning. The library was the student's central location for acquiring skills, information and integrating those skills into the learning process. The librarians wanted to systematically integrate the library into the online courses at the college because it was likely to increase usage by students, overall. Planning the process and organizing the key components in the initial stages was vital to establishing successful course integration.

Collaboration and Integration

Course integration involved the librarians collaborating with other experts at the college to supplement the courses for an enriching student experience through exposure to scholarly resources and acquiring the needed information seeking skills.

We decided we would initiate conversations on the use of library resources and services through soliciting invitations to academic unit kickoff meetings where most of the academic staff would be present. We worked with the instructional designers to be in on their initial meetings with the course developers (initial instructors of the new course). We sought out our academic unit advocates and began determining the new online courses to be developed. We had already recognized the need to collaborate with the instructional designers and met with the director for planning.

The conversations with the instructional designer and director began in late 2007. We were always focused on the college's direction and moving progressively to support the community. Through our conversations, it was agreed that the ultimate goal of the librarians, designers

and developers was to increase student learning and success. We shared our thoughts to make use of the library's resources and services in the online courses. This would provide the designers with easily accessible sources (subscription

based) to place in the course, from the onset of the course creation; and allowed for developers to have research conducted by the librarians narrowing choices to relevant information; and developers having more time to work on the contents for the course. It would also make the work of the designers easier knowing where the resources originated, in case any changes would need to be made. We all recognized that enhancing the courses content with library resources would also minimize maintenance of the content over time.

We had to be proactive, initiating conversations to involve others. It was important to share how the combination of ideas and knowledge and expertise would create a union between different professionals enriching the experiences of the students. The library provided an array of services (by phone, fax, and email). In addition to these services available to students, faculty and staff we created teaching and learning tools. The resources are all customized to compliment the curriculum.

Course Development Process

It was decided that the process would begin as a pilot to include a specified number of courses to be launched over a twelve month period. The assistance of instructional designers was important in the creation of a permanent "space," within the online courses for the inclusion of the library (in the development process).

Several meetings took place between the director of instructional designers and the librarians where we were encouraged to collaborate on course design, including the creation of a library module with templates in each new course development shell. Guidelines were written (by the librarians) to help with setting timeframes for requested sources, allowing librarians to produce quality services and manage the workflow. Documents were created to identify the services and resources available in the library; some resources also included the number that could be provided; and a course resource request form, as a means for communicating with the developer at their point of need. In an effort to be as responsive as possible, the details of the form asked information about the course through course descriptions or syllabi. The library module allowed all the documents to be in one place in the course development shell.

We came up with parameters for the amount of resources we could initially provide and discussed how we would distribute the requests. We decided upon a pilot group of courses and moved forward based on an evaluation of how many requests were submitted as a result of the initial contacts (kick off course development calls). The librarians resolved how initial calls and requests would be managed. We wanted to insure efficiency and quality of services.

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This established the guidelines for librarian participation in kickoff meetings which became course development calls. We now had a model in place to be implemented in 2008 to begin participating in course development conference calls. The meetings with the librarians and academic units took the form of conference calls with orientations to the many facets of course development. Each professional i.e., instructional designer, assessment specialist, etc. and librarians described their role to the course developer, explaining how their particular expertise and resources could be used in the course.

The outreach of the librarians established a clear way to begin to meet the needs of the students through course involvement. As the requests for librarians participation in the course development calls increased there was also an increase in requests for assistance in providing resources and services. The instructional designers, program directors, deans, and assessment specialists shared the value of working together on the initial conversations about the course content.

In the course development calls the librarians would familiarize the developers with accessibility to resources, and highlighted discipline specific sources. The overview included an introduction to services and a demonstration of where the library module and link to the library (resources) appeared in the course shell. These calls gave the developer an opportunity to ask questions of the librarians as well as the other team members in on the call. The developers recognized the advantage to

having librarians help early in the process, with acquiring sources of relevance and opportunity for collaboration on instruction.

Once the call was completed the librarian documented the call and calendared for follow up with the developer in two to three weeks. Follow up consisted of making contact with the developer and again offering services or resources, if they were not requested previously. The **ECVL** team of librarians wanted to extend the opportunity for developers to take advantage of the resources and services available, through follow up contacts.

Communication was the most important factor in achieving course integration. Librarians maintained contact with the academic units and other support service areas as requests for conference calls continued. The librarians continued to be invited to the calls, increasing overall requests with some months busier than others.

As time progressed, not all orientations resulted in the use of library resources and services. We attributed the lack of use of resources (from **ECVL**) to developers who had preselected resources (for new courses). As we evaluated the pilot progress, we decided we would participate in more calls for new courses. Our goal for our pilot was reached and we began to accept more course development call invitations. We recognized that we were able to open up our pilot to include all new online courses. As a result of increasing the number of conference calls participated in, we increased our visibility.

Approximately half of the conference calls resulted in requests for services such as chats, library assignments, tip sheets and database resources. The first year ended with the li-

brarians providing resources to about half of the courses where course development calls took place.

Conclusion

This year, the calls have increased about 10% to include a wider range of disciplines. As we move forward in our course integration process, we will evaluate how we can improve the model by revisiting our statistics, the types of requests we have received and review the anticipated number of new courses to be developed for the upcoming year. We will coordinate with the instructional designers and academic units to share what worked well, what our challenges were (as a group) and what we can do to enhance the experience. From all of this, we will analyze the overall process and begin to establish best practices.

The synergy that has been generated through the team of librarians, academic unit (administrators), developers, instructional designers and assessment specialists is an example of how defined roles blend together, yet remain distinct to accomplish a common goal. Each professional brought a different set of skills to the development phase of the courses. All the available options for creating a rich and robust course were available to the developer, who often took advantage of these opportunities.

We understand we are still at the early stages of developing our course development model and over time will make changes and adjustments fitting for the college. We do feel that we have made a great effort in developing a systematic way in our collaborative approach to library integration. 🌱

“Going Green in the Library: It’s Not Just for Contractors”

by **Michael A. Crumpton** (Assistant Dean for Administrative Services, University of North Carolina at Greensboro)

A panel discussion is defined as a discussion of a subject of public interest, by a group of persons forming a panel, often before an audience. At the recent conference, *Inspiration, Innovation, Celebration: an Entrepreneurial Conference for Librarians*, the subject was “Green” and “Libraries” and the panel was a group of librarians who really care about sustainability. Panel members who presented and contributed included; **Ameet Doshi** from **Georgia Perimeter College**, **Mary Scanlon** from **Wake Forest University** and **Sarah Dorsey**, **Beth Filar-Williams** and **Mike Crumpton**, all from the **University of North Carolina at Greensboro**.

This panel addressed sustainable and green issues and actions outside of the larger realm of contract work or building design, and specifically, what libraries can do to make a difference within their larger community or organization. Libraries can present themselves as meeting the

needs of the present so that future generations can meet their own need and, simultaneously, create healthier ecosystems, healthier social systems and healthier economies — the triple bottom line. Libraries can also influence actions by using the facility to promote awareness, using resources to educate and encouraging staff to take action and set examples.

The panel broke this discussion down into the topics reflecting current and potential activities for libraries or individuals to address or influence. Using **TurningPoint** software the panel also solicited input from the audience as to current activities that each are aware of or participate in. These results are a sampling of sustainable activities within a library environment.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

The first step in developing a sustainable program is to learn to REDUCE. As an example, start simple: reduce paper usage and

waste. The average American worker uses about 10,000 sheets a year — about five sheets per hour worked — Or, 650 lbs of paper where only half might get recycled. Americans trash enough office paper to build a 12-foot wall from Los Angeles to New York City so start thinking about reducing your own paper waste. *How?* A lot can be saved just by breaking habits. Do you really need to print that email? Print on demand, not just to file in a folder for later use. Make your margins smaller. Print only a selection. Avoid images. These actions are especially relevant with recent budget reductions faced by most organizations. Try software such as **printgreener.com**, which makes it easy for you and gets rid of extra images, legal jargon, banners ads, etc. It’s free for basic use or you can pay for a MAC version or an upgrade. The software also keeps track of the amount of paper used and money saved.

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