Amplifying the Educational Role of Librarians

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Our libraries and universities are continuously adapting, seeking effective ways to respond to the fundamental and interconnected missions of research, teaching, and public service. To name just a few recent shifts: institutions and departments have drafted and adopted student learning outcomes for all graduates of their programs; curricula have evolved to include problem-solving and research-based learning; research projects incorporate various media and take more technological and creative forms; online programs have increased exponentially; and national studies and educational research have informed our understanding of factors that enhance student engagement[1] and result in deeper learning.[2]

As institutions respond to these changes, librarians can, and should, offer valuable perspectives and expertise to initiatives such as accreditation planning and strategic goal setting, development of student learning outcomes, design of course management systems, assessment of student learning, and promotion of teaching-effectiveness programs. My focus within the process at Berkeley, and for this article, will be the often under-emphasized educational role of librarians.

Responding strategically to economic pressures, many libraries are taking a fresh look at the changing needs of faculty and students and realigning the library's priorities and models to best meet current and future needs. As with many ARL libraries, the University of California, Berkeley has a decentralized library system and a campus with research interests that are both wide and deep; identification of lower priorities or lesser-used functions is neither easy nor obvious. However, the librarian's role as an educational partner is recognized as one area of strategic importance for the long-term vitality of research libraries and the effectiveness of campus teaching and learning initiatives.

The model of library liaisons dedicated to serving particular disciplines and cohorts is regularly mentioned by our campus partners as effective and valuable. While the potential of the library liaisons is clear, a re-conceptualization of the model is underway at Berkeley, as it is in most of our organizations.

Integrating the Liaison into the Curriculum

At Berkeley, library liaisons are assigned to each academic program and department and the Berkeley Library culture traditionally mirrored the faculty culture with its emphasis on subject specialization. This emphasis was reshaped several years ago when we extended the library liaison model to include academic support units (i.e. Academic Achievement Programs, Centers for Transfer, Re-entry and Student Parents; Educational Technology Services; Graduate Student Instructor Teaching and Resource Center; Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program).

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Further shifts in thinking about the librarian role in education arose from a six-year initiative focused on enhancing undergraduate education and supporting a community of faculty dedicated to teaching and learning.[3] Our experience with the Mellon Library/Faculty Fellowship for Undergraduate Research initiative—funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with co-principal investigators from the University Library and Vice Provost's Office—gave the Library increased insight about challenges, opportunities, and value of richer instructional partnerships.

The initiative provided library staff with the opportunity to elevate their role in contributing to the campus' teaching mission. Supporting individual faculty selected for the program each year, library liaisons were part of Implementation Teams with an educational technologist, a pedagogical specialist from the Graduate Student Instructor Teaching & Resource Center, and an assessment specialist. Throughout the year the librarians honed their skills for collaboration and project management, and were pushed into less familiar instructional terrain, analyzing draft assignments and recommending alternatives that would more effectively benefit student learning in the process of research rather than simply focusing on differences between sources and the mechanics of searching various databases.

Consultations between librarians and faculty began in advance of the semester, when the assignment and the course syllabus were in nascent stages. For most participants—faculty and librarians alike—this conversation was new territory. This approach allowed faculty and librarians to collaboratively build a framework for understanding research processes, using library resources, and designing in-person and online learning environments. Faculty were asked to expand their notion of the types of expertise librarians could offer, and to see the library as an extension of the classroom, incorporating use of library collections and research-based learning as an integral component of their courses. Librarians needed to develop an in-depth understanding of information literacy as it applied to specific disciplinary foci and practices, and expand their repertoire of approaches for providing effective instruction beyond the traditional one-shot lectures.

Engaging Faculty, Students, and Administrators Through New Roles

An extensive evaluation of the initiative's impact has helped us begin reflecting on our collective experiences.[4] The Library's Educational Initiatives Council has begun creating a new framework for the instructional role of liaison librarians and the organizational support required. The Council is comprised of library staff from various disciplines and specializations, many of whom are library liaisons to an academic department or academic support unit. In a recent structured brainstorming process, the Council members created a list of possible instructional roles and activities for library liaisons, then indicated which ideas they felt would have the most substantial impact and which ideas they felt comfortable personally implementing at this time.

One area of particular interest was a deeper engagement of library liaisons with Deans, Department Chairs, and key faculty to better understand the School's, College's, and department's teaching focus, objectives, and challenges for undergraduate and graduate students, and identify courses in which library support would be most relevant. Currently no such conversations involve the library liaisons. During the Mellon initiative, the AUL for Educational Initiatives and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education met with selected Department Chairs annually to pilot these types of conversations; universally they revealed a great deal of information about opportunities with individual faculty and larger programmatic directions. When thoughtfully designed to elicit key information,

these conversations would contribute to stronger relationships between the library and academic programs, and would potentially inform a broad span of library functions. Additionally the information gleaned would help develop mutually agreed-upon priorities that could help elevate the library liaison's contributions from benefiting individual courses one at a time to impacting the department on the "network level."

Another core function identified was the provision of instruction through in-person course-integrated sessions, synchronous and asynchronous online environments, and alternative models that better support deep learning. While librarians are familiar with the traditional in-person, one-shot, lecture model, all other formats were newer for most library liaisons. As librarians worked with faculty for the Mellon initiative they developed excellent models of new types of "deliverables" for a broad spectrum of disciplines.[5] With a solid grounding in the differences, benefits, and design of other models for instruction, library liaisons would be prepared to suggest alternatives that best suit the course goals, support student learning, and utilize the librarian's time effectively.

Equally compelling was the potential of systematic training for graduate student instructors (GSIs). The Berkeley campus is privileged to have the GSI Teaching & Resource Center that provides workshops, consultations, classroom observations, awards, and a Web-based course on professional standards and ethics in teaching for all interested GSIs, and for the faculty who mentor and guide them. The staff of the GSI Teaching & Resource Center were key partners for the Mellon initiative, and through that process became more aware of the pedagogical interests and expertise within the Library. The library liaison to the GSI Teaching & Resource Center contributes to professional development programs for these future faculty members, and works closely with the faculty leading seminars on teaching in the discipline (required for all first-time GSIs). Library liaisons have piloted other creative approaches for graduate students in general, such as integrating information literacy and research training as part of the preparation for graduate students who introduce visiting speakers throughout the year. Graduate students, whether conducting research on their own or learning to guide undergraduate students through the process, benefit enormously from interaction with their library liaisons and the Library could make the most of successful experiences by sharing them more broadly with all liaisons to emulate or adapt.

Supporting Change to Meet Current and Future Needs

It is clear that developing the educational role for library liaisons outlined in our early discussions at Berkeley will require significant organizational support. Library administrators, not just library liaisons, must provide compelling arguments about the value of including librarians in teaching and learning initiatives. I am grateful for our administrative model, which allows one of my colleagues to provide leadership for collections and scholarly communication, another colleague to provide leadership for public services, and affords me the opportunity to focus on the full spectrum of the Library's educational initiatives. I can attest to the crucial role of librarians with professional backgrounds and expertise related to assessment, instructional design, learning outcomes, and pedagogy as applied in traditional and e-learning environments. They are able to juxtapose the general information literacy and critical thinking issues with the disciplines and bridge conversations between library liaisons, faculty, and other pedagogical specialists on campus. As research libraries explore ways to impact instruction in new and systemic ways, these librarians are essential.

One of the challenges of rethinking liaison roles is that the functions identified as having the potential for greatest impact were also the areas that Library's Educational Initiatives Council members indicated that they did not feel were areas of personal strength. In 2008 the Berkeley Library launched the Instructor Development Program, designed to provide all library instructors with opportunities to improve their skills and expand their knowledge through a structured program that meets their needs and rewards their participation. Chaired by two librarians who apply for a two-year position, this program aims to create a strong community of practice within the organization which will aid us in supporting library liaisons as they take on new and enhanced roles.

Many questions remain about the breadth and depth of responsibilities for library liaisons at Berkeley. For at least the next few years, campus conversations are likely to focus on approaches for operating effectively and creatively with fewer resources and fewer staff. While we can hope that the economic pressures relax, on my campus we discuss the current budgetary situation as "the new normal." As we come to terms with the realities of "the new normal," develop a clearer vision of the future needs of our faculty and

students, and explore areas of collaboration with partners on campus and externally, I believe our efforts to amplify and support the educational role of library liaisons will be one of our most fruitful and valuable endeavors.

1. For example the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) launched as a pilot in 1999, http://nsse.iub.edu/.

2. A summary of deeper learning principles summarized from several sources is provided in the table on p. 29 of Carmean, Colleen and Jeremy Haefner. Nov/Dec 2002. "Mind over Matter: Transforming Course Management Systems into Effective Learning." *EDUCAUSE Review*: 27-34. http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/erm0261.pdf.

3. See the project Web site at University of California, Berkeley. Mellon Library/Faculty Fellowship for Undergraduate Research. http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/mellon/.

4. Berkeley's Mellon Library/Faculty Fellowship for Undergraduate Research initiative produced two evaluative reports: one authored by an independent evaluation consultant (Ammon, Mary Sue. 2008. Evaluation Summary. http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/mellon/overview/2008_EvaluationReport_Mellon_Final.pdf.) and one authored by the librarian who served as the assessment consultant on the Implementation Teams (McDaniel, Sarah. 2008. Report on the Assessment of Student Learning. http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/mellon/overview/2008_AssessmentReport_Mellon_Final.pdf.)

5. For a richer discussion of the assignment consultancy process and examples of deliverables developed for the Mellon initiative see Gallagher, Kathleen. 2009. "From Guest Lecturer to Assignment Consultant: Exploring a New Role for the Teaching Librarian." In *Uncharted Waters: Tapping the Depths of Our Community to Enhance Learning*. Ypsilanti, MI: LOEX Press.

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