Leaving the Library: How We Improved Information Literacy by Joining Our User Communities

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Why Leave?

- Liaison librarians in library offices
- Reactive: respond to IL requests
- Standardized one-shot sessions
- Service provider
- Reference questions down
- Library building = study space
- Becoming irrelevant to program and campus student learning goals
The Solution?

Join our user communities

Models:

- **David Shumaker**: The Embedded Librarian: Innovative Strategies for Taking Knowledge Where It’s Needed
- **R. David Lankes**: The New Librarianship Field Guide; Atlas of New Librarianship
The Solution?

“When people have an information need they’ll always ask people they know before they ask a librarian. The trick is making sure that librarians are some of the people they know.” – Jessamyn West (pg. 83, Atlas of New Librarianship)
Joining User Communities: Process

- Office *among faculty offices*
- 60% user community/40% library split
- Posted office hours
- On program email lists
- Marketing
Joining User Communities: Strategies

- Be proactive – don’t wait to be asked
- Entrepreneurial mindset
- Informal needs assessment
- Troubleshooting mode
- Embrace serendipitous opportunities for partnership
Information Literacy Partnerships

Customized, Value-Added Collaborative Partnerships:

- Strategically placed in courses throughout the curriculum
- Embedded in courses and course management sites
- Develop and teach program-specific IL credit course
- Online IL tutorial development
- Course and assignment redesign projects to incorporate IL
- Honors and Graduate program research consultant
Information Literacy Outcomes

- Significantly higher number of student and faculty interactions
- LibGuide use significantly higher
- Students score significantly higher on evaluating sources compared to students in one-shots
- Pre-tests and post-tests indicate significant student skill development:
  - developing strong research questions
  - evaluating and selecting sources
  - using sources to build evidence and arguments
  - synthesizing sources
  - citing sources
Kresge Library
Ross School of Business
University of Michigan
Kresge Library & Ross School Background

- 100% digital library
- 7.5 reference librarians + 1 director
Kresge Library & Ross School Background

- 4,068 students (Fall 2018)
- Programs
  - Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)
  - Master of Business Administration (MBA)
  - Master of Supply Chain Management (MSCM)
  - Master of Management (MM)
  - Master of Accounting (MAcc)
  - PhD
Action-Based Learning

Learning Business by Doing Business.
Action-Based Learning

- Learning by doing
  - Students are put in real-world situations, guided by faculty, with real stakes
- No case study with guidance questions
  - Teams work with real deadlines and uncertainty
  - Teams present a solution to the organization that is sponsoring the project
Multidisciplinary Action Projects (MAP)
Multidisciplinary Action Projects (MAP)

- Teams of students analyze business problems or opportunities and make recommendations for improvements
  - Students (4-6 per team)
  - Sponsor (companies, nonprofits, NGOs, government organizations)
  - Faculty advisor
  - Travel advisor
  - Communication advisor
  - Research expert (librarian)
## Action-Based Learning (ABL) Programs

### MAP Programs

- MBA MAP
  - Full-time (85 projects)
  - Part-time
    - Evening (10 projects)
    - Weekend (25 projects)
    - Online (TBD)
  - Global (10 projects)
  - Executive (25 projects)
    - Ann Arbor, MI (16)
    - Los Angeles, CA (9)
- Capstone MAP: BBA and Master of Mgmt. (40 projects)

### Other ABL Examples

- Classes
  - ES 395 Entrepreneurial Management
  - TO 300 Business Information Systems
  - Strat 492 Dynamic Capabilities Through Corporate Development
- Real Experiences in ABL (REAL)
  - Michigan Business Challenge
  - Maize and Blue Fund
  - Erb Impact Projects
  - Zell Entrepreneurs
  - Sanger Leadership Crisis Challenge
- Clubs, competitions, etc.
Los Angeles MAP
LA MAP – Background

- Part of the Executive MBA Program
- Launched in 2012
- Students are usually working full-time in various industries
LA MAP - Overview

- Usually 8-10 student teams
- Students, professors, and librarians convene 3 times during the fall semester
LA MAP – Librarian Role

- 1st visit (late Oct. or early Nov.)
  - Formal one hour presentation on the afternoon of the first day
    - Showcase library databases
    - Customize examples to the sponsors’ proposals
  - Visits to each team in their breakout rooms
    - Each librarian has 4-5 teams
    - Sit in on the sponsor presentation/meeting
    - Gather preliminary requests based on team meetings with the sponsor
  - Dinner with entire cohort
LA MAP – Librarian Role

- **2\textsuperscript{ND} visit (late Nov.)**
  - Continue to visit teams in their breakout rooms
    - Some teams may be traveling to sponsor locations
    - Address new requests based on shifting team priorities

- **3\textsuperscript{RD} visit (mid Dec.)**
  - Attend the final presentations
  - Wrap up dinner with faculty and support staff

- Between visits
  - Respond to the flood of information requests via email
LA MAP – Engaging Place and Service

- We live, eat, and mingle with the students
  - Research is customized for the LA user community
- We get to meet the sponsors and hear their presentations
  - Better understanding of the project scope
LA MAP – Outcomes

- Information literacy outcomes
  - Students have a much better understanding of resources and library services
  - Students come back for library help in subsequent classes
    - “I wish I had known about the library earlier in the program.”
  - Students learn of other services, i.e. career and job search assistance
LA MAP – Outcomes

- More information requests per team
  - 8.0 per AA team, 11.4 per LA team
- Library recognition
  - Teams acknowledge librarian contributions during final presentations
  - Sponsors and the faculty advisors learn about our contributions
  - Faculty become advocates of the library
    - Our research expertise is marketed as a competitive advantage to our MBA program
    - Faculty highly encourage the use of our services
  - Faculty can justify the travel cost to administration
LA MAP – Takeaways

- One-shot presentations followed by one-on-one meetings lead to much higher usage
- Living with the user community is a great way to understand their needs
  - Librarians are available and approachable
  - Feedback is immediate and in-person
  - Questions are more thoughtful and impactful
- Since the library is 100% online, it frees up the librarians to venture into the user community
- Having a physical human presence is important in a virtual world
  - It’s all about relationship building
Benefits

- IL initiatives aligned with user community goals and needs
- Meaningful IL initiatives have high impact on student IL learning
- Valuable partner to faculty in problem-solving and meeting user community goals
- Easier and more motivating for students to consult
- Success snowballs
Challenges

- Success snowballs out of control
- Balancing program and library
- Out of some librarian comfort zone and skill sets

Solutions

- Stay strategic!
- Set clear boundaries
- Provide support, training, and resources