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### Business Liaison Collaboration: A Case Study

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# Business Liaison Collaboration: A Case Study

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## Introduction

The academic library has always been known as a place to go for a book, journal article, or item on reserve. During the past decade the format of these sources has changed from primarily print resources to a mix of print and electronic. Traditional resources and services have expanded to become electronically available from one's desktop. Accessing online scholarly materials is challenging for both the librarian and faculty member. But while the tools of scholarly research have changed, the need for library instruction remains: "Since most faculty find it difficult to keep up with the rapid growth in electronic information sources, instructional librarians need to instruct both students and faculty about these new sources." [1] Just as the tools have changed, instruction has expanded to include collaboration between librarians and faculty. As the role of the librarian has evolved to support the learning environment, collaboration has emerged as a key element in liaison relationships with faculty. The Business Liaison Team at the University of Louisville Libraries collaborated with College of Business and Public Administration faculty to offer a new series of workshops called Research Refreshers, designed to highlight specific electronic resources and demonstrate how to effectively use them.

## Literature Review

For over a century academic librarians have been involved in the integration of library instruction into the curriculum. From agricultural and teachers colleges of the 1920s to liberal arts colleges of the 1960s, the role of library instruction has steadily increased. [2] However, it was in the last quarter century that librarians moved beyond this instructional role into full partnerships with teaching faculty colleagues.

In the Seventies, the theme of integrated instruction increased within the literature. In "Integrated Library Instruction," Kennedy described Earlham College's efforts to move instruction from a time-consuming, individual activity to an integrated and more efficient classroom method. The key was the integration of library instruction into courses that relied heavily on use of the library. [3] Lehman's key article on the faculty-librarian relationship, "Library-Faculty Liaison in the Small College," introduced five methods to increase liaison activities: personal relationships, librarians on faculty committees, structured communication with faculty, the library committee, and bibliographic assistants. [4] These later became the focus for the library liaison movement of the Eighties and Nineties. Lehman encouraged librarians to play an integral role in the institution through open communication with administration and faculty. He believed that role would result in involvement by librarians in the development of new courses and degrees and changes in the curriculum. [5] His vision of having librarians involved outside the library might have influenced later collaborative efforts in course development and co-teaching.

Librarian-faculty interaction in the 1980s centered on course-integrated bibliographic instruction and library workshops designed for faculty. Course-integrated bibliographic instruction took several forms including team-teaching and curriculum development. This was demonstrated in several projects including the availability of a chemical literature course at the University of Colorado at Denver taught by a chemistry professor and a science librarian [6] and collaboration between a librarian and a sociologist at Mankato State University in the course Careers in Criminal Justice. [7] Library workshops designed for teaching faculty included programs at

Michigan State University [8] and Earlham College. [9] Steffen, in her article “College Faculty Goes Online,” echoed other writers on librarian-faculty collaboration. She pointed out the benefits of collaboration to the library, which included improving the library’s image, encouraging faculty to incorporate bibliographic sessions in classes, enabling librarians to hone their pedagogical skills, and enhancing the image of librarians as teachers. [10]

During the 1990s collaboration between librarians and teaching faculty rapidly escalated at academic institutions. Cook, in his overview “Creating Connections: A Review of the Literature,” discussed the positive results between the shifting role of the library and librarians with the rest of the campus. [11] Faculty began to realize the added value of librarians in course planning. Winner, in her article “Librarians as Partners in the Classroom: An Increasing Imperative,” urged librarians to become leaders of the information research process and exploit opportunities to work with faculty. [12] As the Internet and online databases began to be more commonplace, librarians became more involved in supporting active learning in the classroom. Smalley addressed partnering with faculty to incorporate web exercises to help with the complexity and magnitude of resources as they became available in multiple formats. [13] The quality of librarian-faculty relations was also explored within a comprehensive literature review by Kotter, who emphasized the necessity of positive relations between librarians and faculty. [14]

The new millennium has brought changes to the librarian-faculty relationship. Pedagogical strategies, originally designed to enhance the learning environment, have strengthened collaborative partnerships between faculty and librarians. The trend is to provide an active learning environment, which emphasizes the skills needed to evaluate information resources and their relevance to one’s research. One such approach, problem-based learning (PBL), emphasizes the skills students need for information gathering within a discipline. [15] The role of the librarian has shifted from instructional collaborator to information consultant. In this role, librarians must go beyond the walls of the library and interact with faculty and students in classrooms and computer labs thus transitioning from passive liaisons to proactive consultants. [16] Whether collaborating in librarian-faculty relationships or functioning as instructional designers, librarians strive to determine the best way to incorporate information literacy into the curriculum.

In this case study, a team of four librarians expanded their liaison roles to become proactive faculty partners. This collaborative effort resulted in a faculty workshop series, Research Refreshers, and a renewed relationship with the University’s College of Business.

### **History & Development of Faculty Workshops**

The Research Refreshers originated from an established liaison relationship forged by the Business Reference Librarian with the College of Business and continued by the Business Liaison Team. With the arrival of a new Dean of Libraries in 1997, a liaison program was created which matched librarians with each department’s discipline. During the second year of the program, the Business Liaison Team expanded to include a librarian with a business degree and information systems background and a government publications librarian who fostered the ties between business and government resources. The following year, the Electronic Resources Librarian joined the Team. This was important because she held a Masters Degree in Public Administration, a degree program recently added to the College of Business’ curriculum. The College of Business consists of eight departments: Accountancy, Computer Information Systems (CIS), Economics, Equine Industry Program, Finance, Marketing, Management, and the School of Urban and Public Affairs (UPA). Current liaison responsibilities for these departments are divided among the four liaisons. Early activities of the Business Liaison Team included communicating the library’s services through email, letters, and reports at faculty meetings, providing library instruction, and participating in brown-bag forums. Based on the response to these activities, the Departments of Finance and Accountancy asked the Business Liaison Team to conduct a workshop for their faculty covering the electronic resources in their respective disciplines.

In January 2003 the Business Reference Librarian and the Systems Librarian presented the Finance and Accountancy workshop in the library's computer classroom. Fifteen faculty members attended representing 75% of the faculty of the two departments. The workshop covered general information about the University Libraries' website and searching relevant databases. Librarians used two approaches for teaching databases—basic online searching for some, and advanced searching for others—in order to cater to each participant's level of knowledge. Reaction to the workshop was positive as evidenced by in-class comments, email, and through informal conversations with faculty. The participants' attendance and enthusiasm encouraged the workshop leaders. Perhaps the most important outcome of this initial workshop was that it opened doors to other departments in the College of Business. In early February 2003 the College of Business' Professional Development Committee Chair approached the Business Liaison Team to collaborate on additional workshops for all departments. The Team spent the rest of February planning them.

With over 70 faculty members, the Business Liaison Team knew there would be a wide range of needs. The Libraries' have access to over 200 databases, 35 of which are business-related. The Team knew that one session for all departments would not be sufficient for faculty, but eight sessions would not be feasible for the liaisons. In an effort to tailor the workshops to departments' needs, the Team designed four two-hour workshops—one each for CIS, Management, and Marketing, and a combined session for Economics, the Equine Industry Program, and UPA—and divided the teaching load among team members. The workshop format consisted of an overview of the Libraries' website followed by database demonstrations. The overview section included sample searches in the online catalog, an introduction to the Libraries' business research webpage, demonstrations of how to remotely connect to library databases, access electronic books and journals, request an ILL, suggest a new book for purchase, and schedule library instruction sessions. Database demonstrations were tailored to each department's discipline and included information on specific features and sample searches within each. Five databases were central to all workshops: ABI Inform, Business Source Premier, Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe, RDS Business Suite, and Business and Company Research Center. These five databases were supplemented with demonstrations of subject-specific databases such as EconLit for the Economics Research Refresher, Engineering Index and INSPEC for Computer Information Systems, and PAIS International for the School of Urban and Public Affairs. The Liaisons wanted a title for the series that would attract faculty, especially seasoned faculty. The Team agreed not to use library lingo and choose a name that would pique the interest of business faculty. Since some do not realize how rapidly content and database interfaces change, the title needed to attract those familiar with the Libraries' resources as well as those who had little or no exposure to them. The title 'Research Refresher' was coined. Since advertising would be essential to the success of the workshops, the goal was to market them as skills' refreshers by showcasing databases relevant to faculty research.

In early March 2003, the Business Liaison Team met with the Professional Development Committee Chair to discuss advertising strategies. The Chair offered assistance with designing and distributing promotional fliers throughout the College of Business. Additional marketing efforts included mass email notifications, announcements at faculty meetings, and a notice posted in the College's weekly email newsletter. After six weeks of advertising the workshops were held in mid-April 2003.

### **Results and Evaluation**

Attendance at the workshops varied widely among departments. The CIS and Marketing Department Refreshers drew approximately 92% (eleven out of twelve) and 88% (eight out of nine) of their respective faculty. The Management Department Refresher drew 50% (10 out of 20 faculty). Only 14% (four out of 29) of the faculty from the Economics Department, Equine Industry Program, and School of Urban and Public Affairs attended their joint session. However, none were from the School of Urban and Public Affairs.

As a follow-up, the Business Liaison Team sent postcards, business cards, information about the workshops, and an invitation to schedule a Research One-on-One consultation to faculty who did not attend. Although no formal assessment was conducted, several College of Business faculty were impressed with the delivery of the workshops and sent notes to the Business Liaison Team expressing their appreciation. The positive feedback from the faculty indicated that the workshops were successful. The design and implementation of these workshops resulted in increased credibility and team building, and created opportunities for future collaborations between librarians and business faculty. As a professional development opportunity initiated by the College of Business, Research Refreshers had instant credibility and enabled liaisons to strengthen ties with faculty. The workshops attracted both new faculty and those who had never been to the library. Some faculty were unaware of the library resources available to them. Most importantly, the Research Refreshers offered an opportunity for faculty to see what liaisons had been promoting through email and personal contacts.

In a team environment the process of planning and presenting requires cooperation and collaboration. Since some disciplines overlap within university programs, partnering with liaisons outside the Business Team was necessary, as was the case between the CIS Department and the School of Engineering's Computer Engineering and Computer Science Department liaisons. They pooled their resources and created a Research Refresher for the faculty of the CIS department. This intra-liaison exchange was a success because each liaison drew upon one another's expertise to cover overlapping content between business and other disciplines.

While there were successes, there were also disappointments, particularly the low attendance and the preparation time for the workshop that served the departments of Equine, Economics, and UPA. Since no Urban and Public Affairs faculty attended the workshop, the liaisons questioned what additional strategies could have been employed to attract this group. With the enormous amount of time required to plan and develop the Research Refreshers, attendance at the joint session (only 14% of 29 faculty members) did not warrant the investment. Because of the preparation time involved and low attendance, the Business Liaison Team now feels better prepared to market new opportunities to collaborate with faculty.

### **Outcomes**

The goal of the liaisons was to work with teaching faculty by using information literacy to present electronic resources supportive of research within the College of Business. Bell says that "transforming our relationship with faculty requires that we concentrate our efforts to assist them in integrating technology and library resources..." [17] The Research Refreshers were created to do just that. While the primary goal of the Team was conveying the importance of information literacy skills to faculty, the lessons learned and the relationships formed have made an impact on future programming.

Choice of facilities and scheduling are essential to the success of future workshops. While the library has two state-of-the-art computer labs, the best-attended Research Refresher was held in the College of Business following a mandatory faculty meeting where 92% of the CIS faculty attended. When scheduling, it was important to know the various calendars of the University, the College of Business, and the computer labs. The College of Business does not schedule Friday classes, the day reserved for mandatory faculty meetings and professional development activities. Future sessions will likely be better attended if conducted in College of Business classrooms during times most convenient for faculty.

The Business Liaison Team is now contacted frequently to assist with personal research as well as information literacy requests. Additionally, the Research Refreshers resulted in peer-sharing sessions with other librarians and the creation of workshops for visiting

MBA students and Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs). Library colleagues asked for more information about the workshops and requested details on planning and implementation. A Brown Bag session was held for all other library liaisons which allowed the Business Liaison Team to highlight individual Research Refresher presentations. The other liaison teams expressed interest in replicating the workshops for their own disciplines. In summer 2003 the Director of International MBA Programs, who had attended the Management Research Refresher, requested a similar workshop for the College's German MBA students visiting Louisville. The Business Reference Librarian revised the workshop and presented a two-hour session for the students. Based on favorable comments from those attending the German MBA workshops, the librarians again modified the Research Refreshers and taught two-hour sessions for GRAs from the College of Business and Public Administration.

While librarians at the University of Louisville worked with only one college, they still experienced similar results to those librarians at Eastern Kentucky University working with teaching faculty from several disciplines. [18] The impact of collaboration has been felt among four groups: teaching faculty, students, librarians, and the University of Louisville Libraries.

Teaching faculty are:

- o developing confidence in using library databases,
- o viewing librarians as instructional partners,
- o impressed with the libraries' electronic resources,
- o requesting more information literacy classes.

Students are:

- o scheduling Research-One-On-One appointments,
- o better at utilizing electronic databases,
- o beginning to evaluate resources more critically.

Librarians are:

- o communicating more frequently with their liaison faculty,
- o being invited to collaborate in instruction and assignments,
- o collaborating on faculty research projects,
- o participating in faculty recruitment,
- o participating in accreditation processes,
- o assisting with new program and degree proposals.

The University Libraries:

- o have increased visibility on campus through the Library Liaison Program,
- o services are more admired and respected since the creation of the Liaison Program,
- o Information Literacy Program is driving instructional collaboration between faculty and librarians.

### **Conclusion**

The Business Liaison Team began by matching librarians with departments, making presentations at faculty meetings, and sending email about library resources. Networking triggered the invitation to offer a workshop tailored to Finance and Accounting faculty. The success of that initial workshop led the Chair of the Professional Development Committee to ask for similar programs for other departments. Collaborative planning and execution of the Research Refreshers led to increased respect and acceptance for the Team. In the time since the workshops, faculty appear more comfortable calling on librarians to help them with research and teaching. The activities of team building, intra-liaison cooperation, peer-sharing, and workshops for MBA students and GRAs were successes of the Research Refreshers.

Disappointments included a lack of attendance by one department and low turnout in another. The importance of choosing the proper facilities, scheduling, and persistent advertising were valuable lessons learned from the workshops. Despite these setbacks, business liaisons at the University of Louisville Libraries have increased their visibility through this program and continue to expand their collaborative activities with College of Business faculty.

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