

SPARC!

PREPARING FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS FOR INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Janet Goosney, Shannon Gordon, & Heather Pretty
Newfoundland & Labrador Library Association
2008 Conference - May 2, 2008

Summer Program in Academic Research and Communication

2

- Designed for in-coming first-year students
- Based on the Summer Learning Institute at University of Toronto at Scarborough (UTSC)*
- Timeline: 4 days the week before September
- Focus: research and writing skills
- History: SPARC 2006
- Article: *New Library World* (forthcoming)

*http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~tlsweb/students/SLI_RW&P/default.htm

Common framework

3

- Program planning
 - ▣ Examine environmental factors
 - ▣ Identify partners/collaborators
 - ▣ Define program goals & objectives
- Marketing
 - ▣ Identify target audiences
 - ▣ Develop promotional strategies
- Delivery and assessment
 - ▣ Based on adult learning theories
 - ▣ Incorporate a variety of learning and assessment strategies

Environmental factors

4

Key question

What evidence suggests the need for an SLI/SPARC-type program at your institution?

This step provides concrete evidence:

- To program developers, that the effort is worthwhile
- To various other stakeholders – potential partners; administrators; other supporters within or outside your institution

Environmental factors

5

- First year experience survey
 - ▣ “Library skills” - area in which students felt most unprepared (Pippy, 2005, 7-8)

- Senate report on the future of Memorial Libraries
 - ▣ Recommended library instruction be made an even greater priority for first year (Senate, 2004, 4)

- Project SAILS
 - ▣ Indicated that incoming first-year students lack IL skills (Project SAILS, 2006)

- Memorial’s strategic plan
 - ▣ Student-centered goals - “Foster[ing] Student Success and retention”; “Program Innovation and Development”; “Student Support” (Memorial, 2007, p 6-7, 10)

Identifying collaborators

6

Key question

Who else at your institution is in the business of supporting information literacy?

Collaborators can enhance your program by:

- ▣ Introducing complementary spheres of expertise
- ▣ Sharing the substantial workload
- ▣ Helping to broadcast the importance of the program throughout your institution

Identifying collaborators

7

- The Writing Centre
 - ▣ Provides writing-related support to the St. John's campus
 - ▣ Interconnected goals; recognized need to situate research in larger writing-as-process context
 - ▣ Prior collaborations

- The Instructional Development Office (IDO)
 - ▣ Provides leadership and support, and promotes instructional excellence
 - ▣ High level of expertise in teaching and learning
 - ▣ Collaboration as a guiding principle
 - ▣ Prior experience developing a first-year experience course to enhance student success

Setting goals & objectives

8

Key question

What do you want your program to accomplish, and what objectives will achieve those goals?

Goals to address four broad themes:

- user readiness
- critical thinking
- resources & services
- user transition and/or anxiety

Setting goals & objectives

9

- Five program goals - to:
 - Improve student readiness for university
 - Foster critical thinking about what students read and write
 - Introduce students to university-level research, writing and the expectations thereof
 - Introduce facilities/resources that will assist them in research and writing
 - Offer a program that has a first-year focus and eases first-year transition

Setting goals & objectives

10

- ❑ Led to learning objectives that articulated the knowledge, skills and values we hoped students would acquire
- ❑ Formed structure on which content was developed
- ❑ Helped to us prioritize potential content
- ❑ Increased our understanding of how research and writing are connected
- ❑ On-going process – continue to revisit goals and objectives based on evaluation and experience

Marketing

11

- Questions to consider
 - ▣ What is a 'good' program name?
 - ▣ Should a registration fee be implemented?
 - ▣ Does publicizing the program fit your context?
 - ▣ Who is the program's target audience?

- Specific criteria was determined in 2006
 - ▣ Must be accepted for fall term and planning to attend
 - ▣ Plan to take SPARC seriously
 - ▣ Will benefit from experience regardless of academic status

Within high schools

12

□ Questions to consider

- Logical approach?
- Are in-person visits feasible?
- Is the appropriate audience being targeted?
- Is contact information accessible and accurate?

□ Challenges

- People lead busy lives (principals and students alike)
- Promotional material often went to wrong people
- Lack of consistent and current contact information
- Low registration numbers

Beyond high schools

13

- School's out for the summer!

- Questions to consider
 - ▣ Is funding/budget a reality?
 - ▣ How much advertising is necessary?
 - ▣ Is access to a marketing expert possible?
 - ▣ Can you collaborate with any other group?

- Challenges
 - ▣ Expensive! Need to locate alternatives to high-cost advertising
 - ▣ SPARC is no longer new
 - ▣ Text-heavy nature of ad
 - ▣ Waitlist was necessary (surprisingly, this is a challenge)

First version

14

Starting your studies at Memorial this fall?

Uncertain about academic expectations? Intimidated by the idea of researching and writing university-level papers? Get a head-start with

SPARC: Summer Program in Academic Research and Communication

August 27-30, 2007

Beneficial ... confidence-building ... informative ... memorable ... valuable ... wonderful! These are just some of the words last year's participants used to describe the SPARC experience.

What is SPARC?

Over four days, you will be introduced to university-level research and writing skills through independent and group activities. You'll gain insight into professors' expectations and Memorial's massive library holdings. You will also get to know 29 other first-year students, meet staff and learn about resources available to you.

The total cost is an enrollment fee of \$25.



For information or to register,
contact a SPARC Coordinator by
calling the QEII Library at **737-7427**,
or visit the SPARC Website:
www.library.mun.ca/sparc.php

Space is limited! Registration deadline is July 13th.

SPARC is supported by Memorial University Libraries; the Writing Centre, Faculty of Arts; and the Instructional Development Office, Distance Education & Learning Technologies

Appeared on page A15 of
The Telegram,
Saturday, May 26, 2007

Second version

15

Appeared on page A5 of
The Telegram,
Friday, July 6, 2007

Starting your studies at Memorial this fall?



**Looking for a head start in honing
your research and writing skills?**

SPARC might be for you!

SPARC (Summer Program in Academic Research & Communication) is an intensive 4-day introduction to academic research and writing, and to university resources.

Program runs August 27 - 30

The total cost is an enrollment fee of \$25.



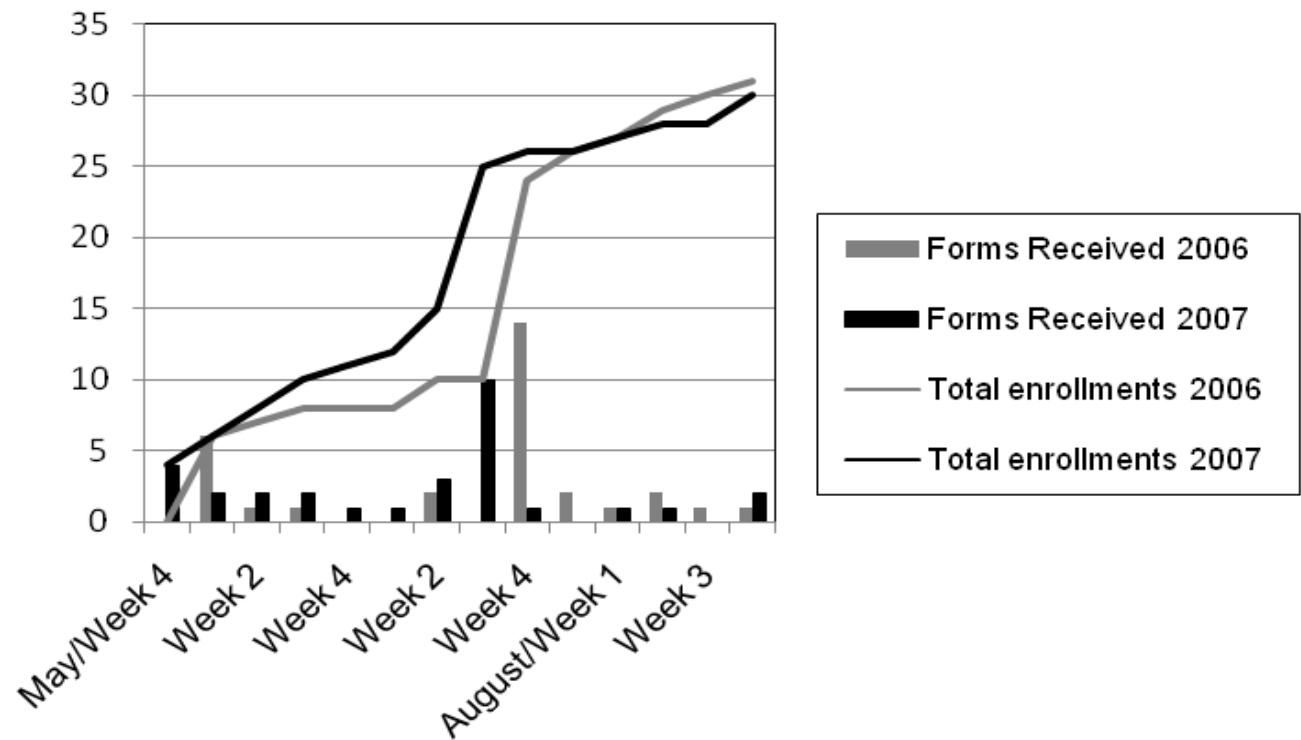
Start strong! REGISTER NOW - Space is limited.
Visit www.library.mun.ca/sparc.php or call 709-737-7427

Supported by Memorial University Libraries; the Writing Centre, Faculty of Arts; and the Instructional Development Office, Distance Education & Learning Technologies

Impact on registration

16

Figure 1. Enrollment By Week



Effective strategies

17

- Certain trends emerged via word of mouth
 - Local newspaper: ad or interview?
 - Parents as informer
 - Surprising results

- Questions to consider
 - What are low cost advertising strategies?
 - How can the program be marketed as it matures?

Delivery and assessment

18

- Physical resources
 - ▣ The QEL Library / The Commons
 - ▣ The Writing Centre
- Research skills
 - ▣ Catalogue and article index searching
 - ▣ Evaluation
- Writing skills
 - ▣ APA, MLA, and Turabian citation styles
 - ▣ Article critique
 - ▣ Research assignment

The research writing cycle

19



Research assignment

20

- SPARC 2006 – Group presentation, handout and bibliography
 - ▣ Group presentation not a realistic first-year assignment
 - ▣ Students had trouble applying research to presentation
 - ▣ Critical thinking component
- SPARC 2007 – Individual annotated bibliography
 - ▣ Individual learning emphasized
 - ▣ Second opportunity for feedback on writing
 - ▣ Evaluation / critical thinking component

Library mystery tour

21

- 2006 – 15-minute guided tour
- 2007 – 90-minute experiential orientation
- Series of clues based on the Niagara University Library Mystery Tour for the First-Year Experience*
- Each clue leads the team to a different resource/service, e.g.
 - ▣ Find a book by call number
 - ▣ Use a reference book
 - ▣ Search the catalogue

* <http://www.niagara.edu/library/lmt.html>



Active learning

22

- Name game
 - ▣ First day, ice breaker
- Library *Mystery* Tour
 - ▣ First day, experiential orientation
- Library Jeopardy
 - ▣ Third day, review
- Chiji card activity
 - ▣ Fourth day, reflection

Assessment

23

- Overall feedback – “very satisfied”
- Speed of the program – “manageable”
- Independent research/writing periods – “appreciated”
- Too much information? – “maybe...”
- Students liked active learning – “YES!!!”
- Students liked research assignments – “hmm...”
- Why did students participate in the program?

Future directions

24

- Where does SPARC go from here?
- Expanded, extracurricular model
 - ▣ More sections to have larger impact
 - ▣ Customized sections for specific groups
 - ▣ Sections with a disciplinary focus
 - ▣ Different timeline
- Curricular model
 - ▣ For-credit, first-year course
 - ▣ Adapt SPARC's process-oriented structure

Thank you!!!

25

- Please feel free to contact us:

- Janet Goosney
 - jgoosney@mun.ca

- Shannon Gordon
 - sgordon@mun.ca

- Heather Pretty
 - hjpretty@mun.ca

Discussion

26

1. Could you adapt this model to help your users manage information overload? (see slide 4)
2. Are there potential collaborators in your library context? (see slide 6)
3. In the information overloaded world of today, how do you get the attention of your users?
4. What are ways that you can incorporate active learning when interacting with users of your library?

References

- Guise, J.L., Goosney, J., Gordon, S., & Pretty, H. (2008) Evolution of a summer research/writing workshop for first year university students. *New Library World* 109(forthcoming).
- Kasbohm, K.E., Schoem, D., & Dubaj, M. (2006) Launching the Library Mystery Tour: A Library Component for the “First-Year Experience.” *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 13(2), 35-46.
- Memorial University. (2007) Strategic Plan. St. John’s, NL, Memorial University.
- Pippy, S. (2005) The first year experience of new students at Memorial University: report of the 2005 survey. CIAP Report 2005-05. St. John’s, Memorial University, Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning. Available <http://www.mun.ca/ciap/fyerep05.pdf>.

References

Project SAILS, Kent State University. (2006) Results of the Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) for Memorial University of Newfoundland. Administration: 2006 Fall First Year. Unpublished report.

Senate, Memorial University. (2005) The Library of the Future: A Report from the Senate Advisory Committee on the Library Concerning the Future of the Memorial Library System, St. John's, NL, Memorial University. Available <http://staff.library.mun.ca/staff/staffdir/future/Report%20to%20Senate%20from%20SACL.pdf>

University of Toronto at Scarborough Summer Learning Institutes. (2006, November 27). Retrieved March 19, 2008, from <http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/TLS/students/SLI.htm>