Editorial Comment

The following article reflects the broader focus I have used in my approach to this column. One of the topics I mentioned in my inaugural address was continuing education for teaching librarians.[1] The Ohio State Libraries program is one of the first to formally address this issue. Although the setting is not health sciences and the staff is large, the perspective and the content of the program have much to offer the readers of MRSQ.

The majority of colleagues I speak with in academic medical center libraries share teaching responsibilities with their co-workers. Many of us are concerned that new and existing library staff gain teaching skills as more and more of us take on a teaching role for the library. As Virginia Tiefel notes, all of the librarians at OSU are expected to teach or be involved in the education program in some way. OSU's solution is a thoughtful and sensitive one.

Francesca Allegri

Head, Information Management Education

Health Sciences Library

University of North Carolina

Chapel Hill, NC

Developing a Teaching Effectiveness Program for Librarians: The Ohio State University Experience

How does a large university library with limited financial resources and staff meet the needs of its librarians to develop and sustain effective teaching skills in a burgeoning library user education program? How can their needs be identified and a program developed to meet them? Can such a program be replicated at other institutions? The Ohio State University Libraries have made substantial progress in mounting a teaching effectiveness program, and it is believed that the structure and much of the content of the program are transferable.

At the Ohio State University, there exists a very strong commitment to the concept of teaching information skills, not only on the part of the library faculty and staff, but also on the part of the

---

[1] Allegri, F. "New Title, New Editor, Broader Focus." Medical Reference Services Quarterly 6(Spring 1987):93.

Libraries' and University's senior administrators. In addressing a faculty/library colloquium in 1982, Edward H. Jennings, President of the Ohio State University observed:

> We're all aware that we are in an age of information explosion-not only of information in specific disciplines, but also in the need for access to knowledge that cuts across-and combines and uses knowledge from-various fields. It must be the mission of the University and of all of our faculty to help develop those critical abilities of information usage in all of our students.

In 1986 the Ohio State University Libraries (OSU) developed a strategic planning document for the future of the library system which expressed this philosophy about library instruction:

> To be useful citizens of an information-dependent society, students must be taught how to identify, locate, evaluate, and utilize information in an effective manner. . . . In addition to providing instruction in traditional bibliography and basic library use techniques, librarians are also responsible for an ever-larger role in teaching the use of new information technology.

Given the emphasis on teaching information skills to students at Ohio State and renewed attention to improving teaching, generally, on the campus and nationally, some concerted effort to improve the quality of library instruction was seen to be essential. Indeed, this concern has been expressed by many librarians in the profession. The editors of a recent book on teaching librarians stated their purpose was "to address the need for a continuing program designed to enhance and update the teaching skills needed for providing effective instruction to the students who use the library."[2]

The Need at The Ohio State University Libraries

The library user education program at OSU was formally established in 1978. The program now reaches approximately 20,000 students every year with some form of course-related instruction. As the program has developed, the number of librarians teaching in it has increased proportionately. With every member of the library faculty expected to participate in some aspect of library user education, many librarians expressed a desire/need to improve their teaching skills. In addition, the Libraries' freshman instruction program, which relies very heavily on the contributions of volunteer librarians, was manifesting the need for more effective teaching. This became apparent in comments by both librarians and freshman instructors who had observed some student inattention during the library presentation.

In its initial response to these expressed and perceived needs, the library user education office sponsored an ad hoc "communications workshop" and a full-day teaching workshop in the early 1980s both conducted by OSU departmental faculty. In 1984, a national leader in library instruction was brought in for a day-long workshop that dealt with both theoretical and practical issues. While these activities were enthusiastically received by the librarians who attended, evaluations clearly reflected the need for an ongoing teaching program.

Three surveys of the library faculty conducted between 1979 and 1984 revealed their primary concerns about user education to be the development and strengthening of teaching techniques and assistance in working with classroom faculty. In the area of teaching techniques, librarians wanted to know more

---

[2] Clark, Alice S., and Jones, Kay F. Teaching Libranam to Teach. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1986, p. viii.

about how to plan instruction generally, organize lectures, write instructional objectives, motivate students, begin an instruction program, develop materials, and handle large classes. They wanted to learn more about how to apply psychological principles of learning and use techniques that would help them to work effectively with classroom faculty. They wanted to discuss innovative approaches to instruction-and their acceptability to others-and have opportunities to share experiences and exchange ideas. A more recent evaluation done in conjunction with two videotaping workshops in summer 1986 showed the same priorities: how to develop teaching techniques, evaluate instruction in terms of goals and objectives, plan lessons, create materials, involve students, and teach large classes.

Planning the Program

In the mid-1980s, with the need for an ongoing, comprehensive teaching effectiveness program clearly established, expertise to help in the planning and development of such a program was sought. A teaching consultant from the campus' Center for Teaching Excellence (CX) worked with librarians over a period of months to develop instructional goals and objectives and program activities. Librarians wrote the instructional goals and objectives and the teaching consultant developed the program activities which would offer a variety of approaches to achieve instructional objectives. Organized into five learning concepts, activities were applied to instructional objectives. For example, to orient librarians to the user education program, a handbook of policies and procedures would be written and a mentoring system established. At the next level of building learning skills, handouts and workshops are appropriate modes of instruction. The activities would be initiated where applicable to achieve the instructional objectives.

The following is a list of the instructional goals and objectives developed by the OSU librarians.

Instructional Goals:

A. Librarians will become more effective teachers and communicators.
B. B. Librarians will become more confident about their teaching abilities.

Instructional Objectives:

A. Librarians know and understand basic teaching/learning theory.
B. Librarians know how to apply basic teaching techniques.
C. Librarians are able to develop a lesson plan.
D. Librarians are able to evaluate classroom presentations and materials.
E. Librarians are able to prepare and present effective lectures.
F. Librarians apply good communication skills in their teaching.
G. Librarians make good use of audiovisual materials.

To achieve these objectives, the following program goals and activities were written by Dr. Nancy Chism, Center for. Teaching Excellence, the Ohio State University.

Program Goals:

The program enables librarians to be more effective in their teaching.

Program Activities:

A. Orientation
    a. Handbook of policies and procedures
    b. Introductions/networking/mentoring
    c. Resource displays/information/tours
    d. Talks by experienced leaders
B. Skill-building
    a. Workshop
    b. One-on-one demonstration/practice
    c. Handouts/reading
    d. Demonstration films, etc.
    e. Observation of other teachers
C. Self-awareness
    a. Videotape feedback
    b. Small group instructional diagnosis
    c. In-class feedback devices
    d. Written instruments
    e. Peer visits
D. Understanding
    a. Inquiry/development projects
    b. Reading
    c. Consultation
E. Dialogue
    a. Conversation groups
    b. Lectures/seminars
    c. Conferences

The program was designed to address the needs of both new and experienced library faculty. Clearly, librarians new to OSU and/or to teaching needed an orientation to the library user education program and to teaching. They also needed help in developing their presentational skills, preferably in settings that provided practice and feedback. Experienced librarians especially wanted to know more about teaching techniques, planning lessons, and evaluation. Activities based on the identified needs and instructional objectives were planned for each year, beginning in 1987.

Implementing the Program

A workshop for new library faculty was held in spring 1987 to introduce them to the user education program and office and to describe the various ways in which they could participate. It featured a panel discussion by librarians in the user education office and the Undergraduate Library, who described the program's history and development, instructional support provided by the office, and specific examples of opportunities for them to participate in instruction, such as workshops, research clinics, course-related instruction programs and user education committee service. The ten librarian-attendees were given an evaluation form on which they were asked to list special skills, indicate in which activities they would like to participate, and offer suggestions for future workshops. The general comments and reactions were very positive.

Videotaping sessions were offered for new library faculty and any librarians who were new to teaching. Prior to the workshop the twelve participants were given materials on how to prepare effective presentations and asked to prepare a ten-minute presentation. They were videotaped in small groups, and the tapes played back for critique by the group. Discussion was led by the CTE teaching consultant. Evaluations of the workshops elicited two common responses. One was that the experience overall had been very positive and had increased individuals' confidence in their ability to teach. The other response was a recommendation that a continuing videotaping program be developed so that an individual could be videotaped intermittently over a period of time to monitor improvement.

The CTE teaching consultant then led a workshop in late spring 1987 in which teaching librarians shared their experiences. Titled "Triumphs and Tragedies," the workshop featured a lively discussion in which librarians identified their major concerns. Again, these included questions about how to motivate students, teach large classes, keep lectures to a reasonable length, make single lectures more effective, and reduce lecture time by incorporating more "hands on" teaching. In the discussion, the consultant emphasized three concepts:

1. We learn to teach by teaching.
2. Teaching is experiential.
3. We need to adapt our teaching to the learner.

No "breakthrough solutions" were uncovered, but possible approaches were offered and many of the issues and problems brought out in this forum were covered in an instructional planning workshop offered later in the summer. Librarian-participants unanimously agreed that the one hour allotted for the discussion workshop was inadequate.

The last workshop, which focused on how to plan for instruction, addressed the design of an instructional session, selection of content, and choice of appropriate delivery modes. The CTE teaching consultant again planned and led the workshop. After a general discussion, the group of twenty librarians was divided into four sections. Each group was given a real library teaching situation and asked to establish planning guidelines and plan an instruction session. The entire group then reconvened and shared the results of their planning. The attendees were enthusiastic in their evaluations of the workshop, with several recommending that the length of the next workshop be extended from an hour and a half to at least two hours.

Comment

Evaluations of the OSU Libraries' efforts to improve the teaching effectiveness of librarians, as has been stated, were very positive, even enthusiastic. The comments of participants in seven programs over the last two years were consistent in the concerns and recommendations expressed, the same topics recurring in suggestions for future workshops. Main concerns continue to be how to motivate students, improve lectures, apply the principles of instructional design and evaluation, write and objectives, and create materials. Recommendations included expansion of the videotaping workshop program and increasing the length of workshops. The participants invited more critical evaluation of their presentation skills and indicated a strong desire to meet to discuss experiences. An increased awareness of teaching and coping with its complexities was apparent in virtually all evaluations, as were expressions of increased confidence in the ability to teach effectively.

There were, in fact, few problems of any kind associated with the development of the program. The direct costs of the workshops were minimal. The services of neither the teaching consultant nor the videotaping laboratory were charged to the Libraries. Most of the handouts, required by all the workshops, were provided by the consultant and duplicated by the Libraries. The key ingredient of support was provided by both the library administration and individual library faculty. The Center for Teaching Excellence was critical to the success of these offerings in providing the expertise of an extremely knowledgeable and capable teacher.

The Future

Six activities are planned for 1988. The first is a lecture in the spring on motivating students, to be sponsored by CTE for faculty from throughout the University. Librarians will be urged to attend the lecture and a follow-up session for librarians to discuss applications of the lecture to library instruction will be offered. One or two videotaping sessions will be held in the summer. Since approximately one-third of the ninety library faculty have participated in this program in the last two years, librarians will be encouraged to repeat the experience for enrichment and reinforcement of past experience. Later in the summer, one workshop for librarians will focus on how to motivate and involve students, and another will examine how to evaluate an individual teaching session. A third workshop will provide a forum for librarians to share their experiences and ideas. The length of the workshops will be extended to two hours or more. All activities will be evaluated, and planning for a 1989 program will be based on the results of the evaluations.

Other activities planned include a topical workshop on writing and presenting research papers which will be offered in late spring 1988. It will be conducted by a faculty member in the Communication Department. Although that topic is outside the realm of the user education office's responsibility, the office has assisted in its planning in response to evaluation requests from library faculty. In an attempt to use print as well as workshop methods, a member of the office team will write an article on how to handle student questions in class. This will be published in the Libraries' internal user education newsletter.

Application to Other Libraries

The approach used in developing the OSU program is clearly applicable to other institutions. One must begin by determining what librarians perceive to be their needs and then enlist the help of those in or near the institution with expertise in addressing those needs. Many colleges or universities may not have a unit as structured or developed as Ohio State's Center for Teaching Excellence, but almost all campuses have faculty members who possess expertise in such areas as communication, evaluation, and teaching. Having identified the need and the expertise, one can plan an ongoing program based on established goals and objectives and incorporating proven methods of teaching and evaluation.

If library administrative support is not forthcoming, a strong case for such a program can be made by describing its obvious benefits in enabling librarians to be more effective and efficient in their teaching. A teaching effectiveness program can also favorably impress non-library administrators and faculty who recognize that such a program can make a significant contribution to academic excellence.

Virginia Tiefel

The Ohio State University Libraries

Columbus, Ohio

Readers of this column would enjoy seeing how information management education is being implemented in a variety of settings. I am particularly interested in hearing from those in teaching and non-teaching hospitals, professional societies, and other nonacademic settings. Please send your ideas, comments, materials or other items of interest to the Column Editor: Francesca Allegri, Head of Information Management Education, Health Sciences Library, CB# 7585, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7585.