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Paving the Way for Collaboration Between Librarians and Faculty

Cynthia Wright Swaine
Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes some of the traditional, as well as newer, ways that academic librarians can interact with faculty and thereby demonstrate what they have to offer in future collaborative efforts. Examples are drawn from the author's experience at Old Dominion University (Virginia). Highlights include: university service, including librarians serving on the faculty senate, committees, task forces, and interest groups; communications, including library newsletters; workshops, seminars, and forums for faculty and graduate students; events for new faculty, including participation in university-wide orientation; library instruction, including course-related library instruction and learning communities; collection development, including librarian attendance at faculty meetings of departments; new services, including digital services; work with other service units on campus, including creating World Wide Web-based courses, teaching on television, other nontraditional teaching and learning methods, beginning computer skills workshops for students, and term paper assistance; and social gatherings. (MES)

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Paving the Way for Collaboration between Librarians and Faculty

Cynthia Wright Swaine
November, 1999

As the new millenium approaches, the role of librarians is changing, and collaboration with teaching faculty is becoming a goal of many academic libraries. Before such collaboration can occur, teaching faculty must recognize and value the talents and skills librarians can contribute to the learning process. This article summarizes some of the traditional as well as newer ways librarians can interact with faculty and thereby demonstrate what they have to offer in future collaborative efforts. Examples are from the author's experience at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.

University Service

Librarians who serve on the Faculty Senate are in a position to gain respect of other senators; that respect may then be generalized to librarians as a group. The University Librarian serves on the Council of Senior Academic Deans, but other librarians have an opportunity to serve on a variety of university committees, task forces and interest groups. At Old Dominion University, librarians are invited annually, with the rest of the faculty, to accept positions on a number of Senate committees. Task forces on such issues as technology, distance learning, or evaluation of services are often created, and librarians with the appropriate interests and expertise may serve with others and make their expertise known in this way. Interest groups, such as the Coalition of Black Faculty and Administrators and the Faculty Women's Caucus, are additional important ways librarians may make faculty contacts and affect faculty perceptions of their

expertise.

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Communications

Most academic libraries produce newsletters, whether they be online or in print. At Old Dominion University, it was decided to use both formats for our quarterly newsletter, *Library Update*, which is aimed primarily at faculty. In addition, in 1996 a few librarians decided to form a team to focus on library instruction for faculty. This group decided to issue a weekly announcement of library news. Since new databases were frequently being added to the library's collections, and since the library was undergoing major building renovations, *LibNews-L* became an excellent vehicle for communicating to faculty and other interested library users. Online copies of these publications are available at <http://www.lib.odu.edu/aboutlib/pubs/libnews/> and <http://www.lib.odu.edu/aboutlib/pubs/lupdate>.

Workshops, Forums

The same Faculty Instruction Group began to offer a regular series of workshops, seminars and forums for faculty. Titled *Faculty Events at the Library*, the series is now in its third semester. Although initially it was difficult to get many faculty to attend, the reputation of these events and of the librarians running them is spreading by word-of-mouth. Recently, we have seen some faculty members return and bring their colleagues along to other library events. In addition, we are now inviting graduate students, our future faculty members, to attend as well. Perceptions begin early, and we may be paving the way for other librarians in years to come.

Events for New Faculty

Each August, one day is set aside for a university-wide orientation of new faculty. The University Librarian speaks briefly to the entire group of new faculty about library innovations and services. The Instruction Services Librarian greets the faculty one at a time over coffee and croissants at an information table. In addition, packets of materials --including the current library newsletter, a library guide to resources in each faculty member's specialty, and an invitation to attend a *Tour & Techniques* session--are mailed to all new faculty that same day. Once again, faculty members have an opportunity to talk with us and to see some of our printed materials. The secondary benefit, once again, is establishing the possibility for future collaboration.

Library Instruction

Especially in course-related library instruction, librarians have the opportunity to partner with faculty in integrating information-gathering skills into courses. Many times, library instruction is an adjunct to the course, but as the faculty member observes the librarian's understanding of student needs and talent in helping students learn, the way for true collaboration is opened.

One of the new ways we are setting the stage for collaboration is through learning communities. Old Dominion University recently established some thirty learning communities for freshmen. The library was pro-active in offering packets of library information to faculty leaders and in setting up workshops for these students. Although this is not a true collaborative effort yet, it demonstrates the potential to faculty.

Collection Development

Librarians have a long history of collaborating with faculty on collection development, including purchase of materials and assessing collections. At accreditation time, departments are especially appreciative of librarians' efforts on their behalf. At Old Dominion University, librarian bibliographers attend faculty meetings of departments in their assigned areas of responsibility. Recently, librarians have been encouraged to go beyond the focus on collection development issues in such meetings and talk about other library services, such as library instruction and the faculty workshop series we offer. As the librarian's expertise is discovered and the many roles the library plays are realized, opportunities for further collaboration of varying types may become apparent.

New Services

Among the newer library services at Old Dominion University are digital services. Recently, Perry Library opened a Digital Services Center, whose primary goal is to serve the needs of faculty in creating course web pages, scanning materials for various digital projects, and similar endeavors. The librarians' expertise in this arena is non-traditional. Faculty perceptions change as they see how the librarians' roles have changed. Again, the way is paved for new kinds of collaboration. Instructors wanting their students to have the experience of creating web pages of their own can arrange for class visits in which the librarian and faculty are true collaborators in an effort to help students learn.

Work with other service units on campus

Old Dominion University's Center for Learning Technologies offers a wide variety of services for faculty including creating web-based courses, teaching on television, and other non-traditional teaching and learning methods. The center and the library have collaborated on such efforts as a faculty summer institute and workshops in the center's *Teaching with Technology* series for faculty.

The library is discussing the possibility of working with the Computer Center in offering beginning computer skills workshops for students who buy computers through a special purchase program offered by the center. The Writing Center and the library have also recently begun to collaborate in assisting students with their term paper needs.

Social Gatherings

Informal gatherings, such as faculty "welcome back" picnics and faculty receptions at the president's home offer the opportunity to discuss new library services and departmental projects. Such discussion can lead to ideas for collaboration.

Summary

For faculty to feel comfortable collaborating with librarians, they must know that the role of librarians is changing and that librarians have much that is valuable to offer. Faculty perceptions of librarians can be established and improved through a wide variety of interactions on campus, paving the way for future collaborative efforts.

Cynthia Wright Swaine
Old Dominion University
November, 1999



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Signature: <i>Cynthia Wright Swaine</i>	Printed Name/Position/Title: <i>Cynthia Wright Swaine, Instruction Services Librarian</i>	
Organization/Address: <i>Old Dominion University, Perry Library Norfolk, VA 23529-0256</i>	Telephone: <i>757-683-4185</i>	FAX: <i>757-683-5906</i>
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