2008

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Recommended Citation

McCulley, Lucretia. "Taking the Best of Both Worlds: Success and Challenges with the Hybrid Model of Library Instruction." In *An Introduction to Instructional Services in Academic Libraries*, edited by Elizabeth Connor, 33-42. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Chapter 3

Taking the Best of Both Worlds: Success and Challenges with the Hybrid Model of Library Instruction

Lucretia McCulley

INTRODUCTION

The University of Richmond (UR) is an independent, privately endowed institution, with a total student body of around 5,000 students. Undergraduate and graduate degrees are offered in the liberal arts, business, law, and leadership studies. Library instruction has been an integral part of the university libraries program since the 1970s, initiated by a five-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities College Library Program and the Council on Library Resources. During the past thirty years, the program has continued to grow and reinvent itself. Overall, the instructional services program can be described as a "hybrid library instruction model," emphasizing both course-related instruction throughout the curriculum as well as required Library 100 and Library 101 classes for first-year students. This case study will describe the process of planning and preparing for required classes, including the development of content and hands-on activities, technology components of instruction, instructor preparation, assessment of classes, administrative duties, future plans, and challenges. It will also describe how the Library 100/101 classes serve as a public relations tool and as a base for course-related instruction at the university.

SETTING

Approximately 125 course-related instruction sessions are offered each academic year in the humanities, social sciences, business, and science. At the current time, there is a heavy emphasis on instruction in the areas of sociology, psychology, political science, rhetoric, education, and gender studies. The number of course-related sessions has remained steady throughout the years under the strong liaison librarian program, but first-year student orientation and instruction have gone through several transformations since 1987, including the use of library skills workbooks, audiotape walking tours of the library, online tutorials with WebCT and Blackboard software, and virtual library tours on the library's Web site. Most of the methods were required orientation events for first-year students, but they were not a part of the university curriculum. Experiments with virtual instruction were successful to some degree, but librarians recognized the need for more personal interaction with students as well as giving students the experience of using the physical library. In addition, the UR community focuses on providing personal "high touch" service. As Van Scoyoc notes in an article about reducing library anxiety in first-year students, "a staff-led library instruction session can serve as a time for the students to meet and get to know the librarian as someone who can be a valuable resource in the future."[1]

With the popularity of Google, Yahoo, and other search engines, UR librarians found that increasing numbers of students have never used anything but the Internet to find information. Many students are unfamiliar with the concept of a library catalog and most students have no conception of scholarship and the role it plays in their education. Through focus groups and various library surveys, upper level students indicated that they would like to improve their knowledge of library resources and wish they had known more earlier in their academic careers. During the same time period, faculty also expressed concern about students' understanding of scholarly communication sources. Through the use of faculty focus groups, a faculty/librarian "Think Tank on Information Fluency" and numerous discussions and planning meetings between the outreach and instruction librarians and various groups of faculty, the entire university faculty voted affirmatively in spring 2003 to implement a graduation requirement for basic

library research skills. All first-year students are required to attend two seventy-five-minute workshops, Library 100 in the fall semester and Library 101 in the spring semester, designed to develop essential library research skills. These introductory classes do not include information or instruction on library resources that are related to specific courses or majors at the university. Subject content continues to be covered by the liaison librarians in the various course-related sessions across the curriculum.

COURSE GOALS

The overall goal of Library 100 and 101 is to introduce students to basic library resources and services and to ensure that all students can identify and locate books, journals, and newspaper articles. These basic skills will help students identify material for first-year course-related research assignments and to help them recognize that the library's resources can answer many of the questions that arise as they prepare for and participate in classes. The UR Libraries Web page provides more detailed information on Library 100/101 goals, objectives and learning outcomes,[2] some of which are based on the Association of College & Research Libraries *(ACRL) Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.*[3]

Library 100 and 101 were launched at the beginning of the 2003/2004 academic year. Approximately forty-five sections of Library 100 were taught by eleven librarians during the fall of 2003. In spring 2004, five sections of Library 100 and forty-five sections of Library 101 were offered. This pattern of class sections has continued with both the 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 academic years. Close cooperation and communication with the University Registrar's Office have been extremely important in making the program work successfully. The registrar's office arranges the sections on the online registration system (BANNERWEB) as they would with any other class at the university. This means that students register for the sections during their appointed registration times and librarians manage class rosters, course communication, and grades through the computer registration system. To make the basic skills program relevant and effective, it is important for first-year students to complete the workshops during their first two semesters. The information provided is immediately helpful

to them with their class assignments and serves as a foundation for further course-related instruction.

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

It might appear that designing two seventy-five-minute class sessions would not require a great amount of preparation time. However, with limited class time and the goal of making the sessions "hands on," interactive, and engaging, the outreach and instruction librarians spent several months developing the in-class exercises and instructional scripts so that all the materials could be covered appropriately. Small committees developed the details and then consulted with the teaching team of eleven librarians for feedback and suggestions. One challenge that the team wrestled with was how much information to convey in such a short class period and whether it was possible to incorporate hands-on activities within a limited time period. After much discussion, the instruction librarians decided to focus on three main components, knowing that students often respond well to short "chunks" of information within one class period. For the purposes of Library 100, the content focuses on the library's Web site, the library catalog, and one basic periodical database, Thomson-Gale's Expanded Academic Index. After the librarian provides a brief demonstration and explanation in class, the students complete an exercise of identifying specific sources and services on the library's Web site, so they will feel comfortable navigating the site on their own. Although it was forbidding at first, the teaching team decided to make the leap of incorporating a "book retrieval" search during class time. Students search for a book title in the catalog, identify subject headings and a call number, and then proceed to find the book in the stacks, returning to the classroom with book in hand. The third component of the class focuses on using Expanded Academic Index to complete a topic search and answer questions about the citations retrieved. Library 101 also employs this interactive approach with the exercise sheets. As of early 2006, the content focuses on using the librarian-created subject research guides on the library's Web site to find subject-specific databases, such as WilsonWeb databases (General Science Full-Text, Social Sciences Full-Text, etc.), how to interpret periodical holdings information in the

catalog, how to cite sources, and how to effectively use LexisNexis to find newspaper articles. Students also go out into the periodicals stacks to retrieve a bound periodical, which they use to complete an exercise about citing a specific article.

In order to test the length of the class sessions and the amount of time that the exercises required, each member of the entire teaching team taught a practice session during summer 2003. Practice sessions were also videotaped so that instructors would have some immediate feedback on their performance. The "practice" audience consisted of other library staff members and student assistants. Using this audience had several benefits, such as obtaining comments and suggestions for the presentation of the course and educating all library staff about the new Library 100/101 program. The feedback received was extremely helpful with making adjustments with explanations, clarity, wording on the exercise sheets, and the general pacing of the class. This preparation paid off in the end, with the teaching staff feeling confident with the exercises and the technology used in the class sessions.

Technology is an important component of the Library 100/101 classes in that its presence enhances the presentation and adds important techniques for the teachers to use. An entertaining library news "tabloid" Web page was created to introduce the class sessions. Headlines on the tabloid include such phrases as "Confused students protest over cryptic LC! Just want to know where book is!" and "Tired of searching Google? Visit the UR Libraries Web site!"

NetOP[4] (classroom control software) was installed in the Boatwright Computer Classroom to restrain students from moving ahead, e-mailing, and instant messaging with friends during the class. This software works extremely well with the students and instructors are very pleased with its ease of use. Music, video, and PowerPoint interludes are used in both presentations to add energy and visuals to the classroom environment. For example, the parody song, "Read It in the Tabloids"[5] is used alongside the news tabloid Web page and serves as introductory music and visuals as the students arrive to Library 100. Various PowerPoint programs serve as in-class multiple choice quizzes and present additional facts about library services, similar to the film trivia screen presentations that are currently popular in movie theaters.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

How well do the students learn the material presented in Library 100 and 101? In *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels,* Donald Kirkpatrick outlines four levels of assessment.[6] These levels include reaction (opinion), learning (skills), behavior (apply skills), and results (output improved). In terms of using these four levels of evaluation, the first two levels of assessment have been achieved: (1) What was the student's opinion of the experience, and (2) Did the student "learn" what you hoped they would learn? Both levels are as-sessed through the use of in-class exercises which are graded by each instructor and by the use of several evaluative wrap-up questions at the end of the exercises. It is important to note that each course is "Pass/Fail." If a student makes an effort in good faith to complete all the exercises, then he or she passes the course. Librarians do not de-duct points for small mistakes on the exercise sheet. By assessing the answers to their questions on the evaluative sheets and by reviewing the students' mistakes or misunderstandings on the in-class exercises, librarians can make improvements and changes for the upcoming academic year. Appendix 3.1 provides a synopsis of answers to the wrap-up questions for both the 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 academic years and describes some of the adjustments made with course content and delivery.

Overall, Library 100/101 has been extremely successful in its first two years of implementation. Due to careful planning and excellent cooperation from the registrar's office, class schedules and various student scheduling issues have gone smoothly. To ensure that all stu-dents complete both sessions in their first year at the university, regu-lar reminders are sent by e-mail to academic advisors and students, and holds can be placed on registration. As anticipated, there are prob-lems with a small percentage of students forgetting to attend class, not understanding the requirement, or ignoring reminders about the program. Librarians make every effort possible to communicate with students in regard to the drop/add process, remind them about class meeting times, and schedule additional sections for those who missed class sessions earlier in the semester. At the end of each academic year, librarians are confident that efforts made in good faith have been made to accommodate the students' needs. Another goal is to avoid the

scenario of disgruntled upperclassmen in a class full of first-year students. In an effort to enforce these requirements, the registrar's office has allowed the librarians to place registration holds on students' records if they have not completed the requirement by sophomore year. This process is administratively time consuming and at times frustrating, but it has resulted in the majority of students completing Library 100 and 101 in their first year at the university.

The data for both 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 indicate that the goal of raising student awareness of library resources was attained. Both class content and interactive class exercises are well received by the students and they seemed to appreciate the hands-on, practical learning approach to using appropriate library resources. Library 100 serves as an excellent opportunity to welcome students to the library environment at the UR and to emphasize the personal approach to library services, including reference/information services, personal research appointments, and assistance via e-mail or instant messaging. Outreach and instruction librarians also remind students of the "personal librarian" letter that is sent to each first-year student during the first week of the semester. This letter is from an individual librarian who offers each student to be his or her "personal librarian" and introduces the role of the academic librarian and describes the various library services that support student research.

The students' suggestion about offering Library 100 earlier in the first semester has been very successful and it has meant that students have been able to meet some of their early research needs related to their coursework. In addition, first-year students are fresh and eager in September and both instructors and students have benefited from "beginning of the year" enthusiasm. Evaluative comments about Library 101 enabled librarians to make some slight changes and improvements with the content of the class session.

Beginning in fall 2004, the liaison librarians created *Tip Sheet on Reinforcing Library 100/101 Skills,*[7] and distributed it to all faculty, along with a letter from the university librarian that explained the content and goals of Library 100/101. The tip sheet offers assignment suggestions on how students can continue to use the library catalog or find pertinent class information in *Expanded Academic Index*. Outreach and instruction librarians seek opportunities to meet with their liaison departments and to participate in other meetings with faculty

to discuss how they can reinforce the basic skills presented in the two seventy-five-minute sessions. Other ideas on how to reach the faculty include workshops on how to specifically integrate basic library skills into course curricula or extension of invitations to faculty to observe a Library 100/101 session. When faculty approach librarians for higher-level, course-integrated instruction, liaison librarians also take that opportunity to remind them about what is covered in Library 100/101 and how further assignments and instruction can build upon that experience with upperclassmen. Librarians are encouraged that Library 100 and 101 have served as a base of knowledge for students so that course-related instruction can offer more time and focus on specific library sources and strategies.

CONCLUSION

Future opportunities for the first-year library research skills program include exploring further assessment strategies and the integration of library skills into first-year class assignments. As mentioned, the program was able to achieve the first two levels of assessment, but further work is needed to accomplish the next two levels, which include: (1) Did the student retain the learning?, and (2) Did the student apply the learning? These last two levels are difficult and expensive and to be truly successful, it would require extensive collaboration with faculty. Betsy Barefoot echoed this concern in a recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* by stating that "even if students get an introduction to information literacy in a first-year seminar or a special course, they may not transfer what they learn to 'regular' courses across the disciplines."[8] Achieving continued course integration remains the biggest challenge with Library 100 and 101.

APPENDIX 3.1

Evaluative Questions for Library 100	2003/2004 and 2004/2005
1. What is the most interesting or useful thing you have learned today about using library resources?	The top two topics for both 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 were learning how to use *Expanded Academic Index* to find journal article citations and full-text articles and how to find books in the stacks by using the library catalog. These two

	skills are probably the most important for students to know during their first semester and their answers confirmed the decision to focus on these elements.
2. Write down any question you may have.	For both years, about one-third of the students did not have any further questions, but the other two-thirds ranged from questions about checkout policies, printing credits, and interlibrary loan to "Does the library have a classics section?" Librarians added a personal touch with this question by responding to each student's question via e-mail. Answers to this question were also used to revise some of the course content for the upcoming academic year and to update the PowerPoint presentation on FAQs about library services.
3. What changes would make this workshop more effective?	In 2003/2004, students highly recommended offering the classes earlier in the semester, rather than mid-October. This advice was accepted and librarians worked with the registrar's office to start the Library 100 classes during the first week of September in Fall 2004. For the 2004/2005 academic year, 30% of students had no reply, 18% stated that the classes were very effective and the remaining answers varied across the spectrum. Some typical comments included "provide snacks," "more music," "make the session shorter," and "include a tour of the library."

Evaluative Questions for Library 101	2003/2004	2004/2005
1. What is the most interesting or useful thing you have learned today about using library resources?		
Learning the LexisNexis database	46%	33%
Finding journals in the stacks	20%	15%
How to cite sources	16%	21%
Using WilsonWeb	N/A	29%
2. Rate the overall value of your Library 100/101 class sessions		
Very useful	208 (26%)	201 (26%)
Somewhat useful	453 (58%)	442 (59%)
Not very useful	86 (11%)	65 (9%)
Not useful	36 (4%)	25 (3%)
3. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of the instructor?		
Very effective	564 (72%)	477 (63%)

Appendix 3.1 *(continued)*

Somewhat effective	198 (25%)	236 (31%)
Not very effective	15 (1%)	16 (2%)
Not effective	6 (less than 1%)	4 (less than 1%)
4. What change would make this workshop more useful and effective?		
"Nothing" or "Effective"	N/A	33%
No answer	N/A	23%
Shorter	N/A	8%
Earlier in year or combine with Library 100	N/A	5%

NOTES

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