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Barbara G. Tierney and Linda K. Colding, "Reimagining Research Services' Outreach to Faculty and Students: A Tale of Two Research Departments (University of Central Florida and Florida Gulf Coast University)" (2018). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*.
<http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5703/1288284317046>

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Reimagining Research Services' Outreach to Faculty and Students: A Tale of Two Research Departments (University of Central Florida and Florida Gulf Coast University)

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Abstract

Two academic library research managers discuss innovative outreach strategies that they coordinate in their respective libraries (University of Central Florida serves 68,000+ students; Florida Gulf Coast University serves 15,000+ students) to support faculty and student success for teaching, learning, and research. A poster¹ was created to illustrate these strategies.

University of Central Florida Profile

The University of Central Florida (UCF) is the nation's second largest public university, enrolling over 68,000 students and offering 92 bachelor's, 83 master's, and 31 doctoral programs. UCF Libraries' 20 subject or campus librarians provide proactive outreach to support student and faculty success.

Subject Librarians at UCF

In 2013, UCF Libraries initiated a subject librarian service model with the ambitious goal of every faculty member and every student having a one-stop librarian to support all library-related facets of their teaching, learning, and research activities. The subject librarian serves as the liaison to the academic



Figure 1. Reimagining outreach to faculty and students.

department and is the conduit to library collections, instruction, and research support services.

UCF Libraries' subject librarians work smart to support faculty and student success. Twenty subject or campus librarians, across seven campuses, cover 65 subject areas. It is not unusual for main campus subject librarians to support over 3,000 FTE student enrollments, not including faculty. Although the number of FTE student enrollments is high and the number of faculty ever increasing, this initiative has been extremely successful in maximizing the delivery of library services and resources to its constituents. Subject librarian visibility and accessibility to UCF constituencies is a top priority.

The UCF subject librarian service model strongly encourages each subject librarian to engage in proactive outreach to the faculty and students in his/her assigned academic departments and programs. The subject librarians have 35–45% of their formal "annual assignment and position description" designated for outreach to their assigned faculty and students. The subject librarians routinely report on their outreach progress in both their monthly and annual self-evaluations, and each year the head of Research and Information Services, after reviewing their progress, writes annual evaluations that serve as a basis for promotion, merit salary increases, and awards.

Engagement Librarians at UCF

In addition to subject librarians, UCF Libraries has allocated percentages of librarians' time for engagement with specific populations. Engagement librarians serve as liaisons to the campus units and departments that work directly with each targeted population, and they are the face of library services for those groups.

Targeted populations include graduate students, undergraduate research and honors students, first-time-in-college students, transfer students, online students, and global/international students. Engagement librarians organize and attend events such as orientations, workshops, and welcome events. They may serve as a student's first introduction to the library. Engagement librarians often refer students to their subject librarian for in-depth research assistance.

Subject and engagement librarians use both face-to-face opportunities (visits to faculty and student

orientations, individual faculty offices, student sections of professional organizations, student clubs, library instruction sessions, workshops, research consultations, academic department and university meetings) as well as online interactions (Web-based research guides, tutorials, videos, electronic newsletters, congratulatory e-mails, targeted student group e-mails) to engage in outreach with faculty and students.

The following are recent UCF campus initiatives that subject librarians have used as opportunities for outreach.

Research-Intensive Course Initiative

In spring 2018, UCF rolled out a research-intensive (RI) course initiative that invited interested faculty to redesign one or more of their existing courses to fit an RI profile that emphasized critical thinking, academic communication, and research skills. Early in the rollout of this faculty-facing initiative, subject librarians contacted the Office of Undergraduate Research and asked if they might participate in the RI instructors-in-training workshops.

Each subject librarian reached out to the RI instructor-in-training in his/her discipline to suggest strategies for redesigning the course(s). Subject librarians offered assistance with library resources, scholarly communication techniques, research deliverables, and institutional repository platforms. In addition, subject librarians created a customized libguide for each RI course that provided links to relevant primary sources, online archives, digital projects, archival discovery tools, statistics, and citation tools.

After the subject librarians made a joint presentation at the first RI instructor-in-training workshop, the lead librarian sent the following e-mail to the workshop leader (S. Avila, personal communication, March 2, 2018):

It was a great pleasure to present this morning at the Research Intensive Course Designation workshop. Thank you again for inviting us to speak and to address the faculty cohort on how the UCF Libraries and our subject librarians can partner with them on this initiative. We feel very fortunate to have been invited to speak and to work alongside the Office of Undergraduate Research as you lead this effort. Please rest assured that the UCF Libraries takes this initiative very seriously and we are working

to develop some plans to incorporate useful materials moving forward as this is rolled out to all faculty.

Textbook Alternatives Initiative

In 2015, a group of subject librarians and instructional designers formed a small team to help promote high-quality open educational resources (OERs) and library-sourced content to help reduce the cost of required course materials for students at UCF. UCF subject librarians reached out to their assigned faculty to see if they were interested in providing free or low-cost materials to students by either adopting an existing open text (such as those found at OpenStax), replacing a traditional textbook (using copyright-compliant OER materials), or using library-sourced content to replace textbooks.

Due partly to subject librarian outreach, faculty participation in these efforts has increased as has the impact on student savings and student success. From summer 2016 to fall 2018, faculty who used the above models in their courses impacted 274 course sections and 12,314 students, potentially saving students \$1,050,172.

Faculty Cluster Initiative

In 2014, UCF administration began an initiative to create a series of faculty cluster hires to foster the development of interdisciplinary academic teams focused on solving societal problems. Six faculty clusters were selected in 2014 (cyber security, renewable energy, coastal systems, genomics and bioinformatics, prosthetics, and energy conversion and propulsion) and an additional three clusters (disabled and aging populations and technology, violence against women, and learning sciences) were selected in 2017–2018.

UCF subject librarians reached out to the academic departments supporting each of these clusters, offering to identify library resources to support each topic and to order additional resources as needed. Subject librarians also reached out to the cluster hiring teams to offer to participate in campus interviews for cluster hires and to order customized resources for each new hire as he/she came aboard.

Research Faculty Initiative

When the UCF Nursing librarian reached out to UCF's School of Nursing researchers and the UCF Office of Research and Commercialization (ORC) to offer his

assistance identifying library resources that supported research and grant-writing, he was invited to create a "Research Funder Toolkit" that currently is hosted on websites of the College of Nursing, ORC, and UCF Libraries.

This partnership between the Nursing librarian and ORC led to other UCF subject librarians reaching out to their research coordinator counterparts from colleges and academic departments all over campus, to invite them for a fall 2018 "meet and greet" event at the main library so that they can strategize on future joint research endeavors.

Library Programming to Support Particular Disciplines or Programs

During 2017–2018, the UCF Science subject librarian collaborated with her Physics/Planetary Sciences faculty to present programs titled Total Eclipse of the Sun, International Observe the Moon, and Mars Viewing. She also partnered with her Biology faculty on sponsoring Earth Day and Sea Turtle Walk programs. To ensure high attendance at these programs, the Science Librarian invited selected faculty to bring their entire class to the programs.

In November 2017, the UCF Patent librarian collaborated with UCF's Blackstone Launchpad entrepreneur program to provide patent and trademark training and consultations to staff and students. Another patent outreach activity involved bringing the managing attorney for Trademark Outreach at USPTO to UCF for two days of trademark programming.

In 2018, the UCF Business librarian was awarded a \$3,500 QEP grant to fund a project titled Library Bridging Innovation and Entrepreneurship. This grant allows her to present seminars on tech transfer, patents, market research, and copyright as well as a UCF Alumni entrepreneur panel program. Also in 2018, the UCF Humanities librarian collaborated with colleagues to create the inaugural UCF Faculty Author Series. This series included two panel sessions on academic writing and publishing.

Congratulatory Notes to Faculty

UCF subject librarians are encouraged to carefully monitor university news releases for mention of their assigned faculty or students so that they might send congratulatory notes as part of their outreach. Following is an example of such a note (S. Avila, personal communication, August 1, 2018):

I saw you on the front page of *UCF Today*! Congratulations to you on earning that NSF career grant! Have a great holiday and please let me know if you are available for coffee one of these days. I am interested in learning more about your virtual reality interests and to see how they might align with some initiatives I am trying to get going in the library with emerging technology.

Florida Gulf Coast University and Library Background

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) is a teaching university with 80% of its classes taught by full-time faculty. There are just over 15,000 students representing 46 states and 87 countries. There are 58 undergraduate, 26 graduate, and 5 doctoral programs. In the past academic year, the top three awarded degrees were Communication, Management, and Psychology.

The FGCU Library has over 1.5 million items including books, e-books, journals, e-journals, newspapers, DVDs, CDs, musical scores, and microforms. There are over 400 online research databases providing access to over 70 million full-text articles. The Reference, Research, and Instruction (RRI) department is home to seven subject librarians, a department head who also serves as a subject librarian to one program, and an instructional support specialist. The bulk of the outreach is conducted by the subject librarians.

Outreach to Faculty

The RRI department originated the FGCU Author Series. Each month, a recent book authored by FGCU faculty or staff is selected and featured with an accompanying poster on the FGCU Authors bookshelf. The author and book are also featured on the library's website and social media accounts. The authors are honored at an annual event hosted by the library dean. In addition to the FGCU president and provost, previous award winners, fellow faculty, and library faculty and staff attend. Now in its fourth year, this event is a time to celebrate the publishing accomplishments of the FGCU faculty.

The subject librarians conduct outreach to faculty through other means. Subject librarians create and distribute newsletters in both print and electronic format. These newsletters update teaching faculty about new and continuing library services, databases, and other resources available not only for their students but for their own research. Some

subject librarians attend their academic department meetings. Other faculty communication includes sending congratulatory notes and e-mails for promotion. This personal touch forms friendships and lasting bonds.

The subject librarians attend the New Faculty Orientation held prior to each fall semester. In addition to a presentation about library services and resources, the librarians attend lunch where they are able to mingle and network with their new faculty. Again, this is another opportunity to develop working partnerships. The subject librarians find it easier to reach out to provide instruction and develop course-related material for face-to-face and online courses. Each FGCU course has an online account through Canvas, our learning management system. Research Guides developed by the subject librarians are automatically embedded in these Canvas accounts. The faculty member has the option to turn the guide off but this rarely happens. In fact, many want the subject librarians to create a specific course guide.

The FGCU subject librarians are not the only library staff reaching out to faculty. Through the library's Customer Services department, faculty can use the Library Express Document Service and have their library books delivered and picked up. These are not just books found in the library but include interlibrary loan and uBorrow materials. This goodwill gesture has brought nothing but positive comments.

The Study @ the Library is a space for faculty and graduate students to engage in collaborative research and writing. Graduate students are welcome to use the space for group research and writing projects or meetings with their advisor. The space is available on a first come, first served basis. The study is not intended as a quiet area and collaboration is encouraged.

Outreach to Faculty and Students

Student success and retention are two of the most important issues on college campuses today. The FGCU Library has developed the Textbook Affordability Project, which reaches out to both faculty and students. The Textbook Affordability Project began with a \$40,000 budget provided by the provost. These funds were designated to start a reserve collection of undergraduate textbooks that could be borrowed for two hours to use in the library. This initial collection did not include every textbook required for class. Priority was given to books costing

\$100 or more and courses with high failure and dropout rates. Depending on course enrollment, more than one copy of a title was purchased. The library's Collection Management Department had worked closely with the campus bookstore, which even reduced the price by 25%. Their rationale was that once students opened the book and realized how much they needed the book, they would purchase it. While the library is in the first semester of this project, we are eager to analyze the results. At the midway point of the semester, textbook loans represented just over one-third of all undergraduate loans. The subject librarians have actively worked to get the word out to faculty and students. The faculty newsletters and embedded Research Guides provide information about the project. This is just another way FGCU and the library are helping students succeed.

Outreach to Students

Library Student Ambassadors

The FGCU Library student ambassadors support their peers' research and information literacy needs. Coordinated by the FYE librarian, the ambassadors predominantly support the needs of first-year students. Initially, the ambassadors observed and shadowed but have since gained responsibility for leading programs and instruction as they gained skills and knowledge. Each ambassador works with the coordinator to develop an individual weekly schedule. The ambassadors shadow at the reference desk and provide research assistance and mobile librarian services. The ambassadors also observe instruction sessions or workshops, lead or co-teach an activity or workshop, and create instruction activities. Each ambassador identifies one or more special projects to complete each semester. They also represent the library at Eagle View Orientations, staff tables during Week of Welcome events, provide and participate in library tours, create promotional materials, distribute flyers and posters around campus, speak with students at residential assistant meetings, and create library displays for such events as One Book One Campus, Banned Books Week, and National Library Week.

Welcome Event

The FGCU Library's Welcome Event is held every year as part of FGCU's Weeks of Welcome. Over the years, four themes were created, which includes Pirates, Willy Wonka, Clue (the board game), and Travel (*The Amazing Race* television show). A

scavenger hunt moves students throughout the library to learn about its services as well as have fun. Students are greeted at the library's main entrance and provided with a guide to help them along the hunt. At each stop, students receive information and a stamp for their guide. The stops include the Computer Lab Help Desk, Reference Desk, Stacks, Circulation Desk, Study Rooms, and Archives and Special Collections. At each stop, a librarian or staff member informs the students about what happens in that particular area. When the students have all six stamps, they turn in the guide and take a spin on the prize wheel. They can also be entered into the grand prize drawing. This year the grand prize was a smart TV! This fun-filled event is intended to introduce new students to the subject librarians and the many services they offer.

Student Orientations

Two-day orientations, known as Eagle View Orientations, are available for incoming undergraduate students. Information tables, staffed by subject librarians and library staff, are set up during lunch sessions to provide the students and their families with information. Campus tours also include a stop at the library. An abbreviated one-day orientation is available for transfer students.

Orientations for graduate students occur at the beginning of fall semester. At this evening orientation, several subject librarians provide a general overview of the library's services specific to graduate students. During breakout sessions, subject librarians have the opportunity to meet with their new graduate students and discuss services and resources specific to their program.

Research Day

FGCU faculty guide students in conducting research both inside and outside the classroom that contributes to the local community, shapes policy within Florida, sets trends on the national landscape, and begins dialogues all over the world. Subject librarians have also been involved in assisting students with their research. Sponsored by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, Research Day is a yearly event where students provide oral presentations and present posters about their research. The relationships formed with faculty and students have expanded the roles of subject librarians into serving as judges for these poster sessions. The awards range from the Dean's Award by College for Best Graduate and Best

Undergraduate Posters and the Distinguished University Research Awards for the best Graduate Poster, Undergraduate Poster, and Oral Presentation.

Outreach Committee

The library's Outreach Committee includes a variety of subcommittees specifically focusing on students. The Student Engagement Subcommittee plans student-oriented activities such as the NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) Write-In and the

Library Escape Room. While these activities may not directly relate to student research, they do encourage interest in viewing the library as more than a quiet place to study or find a book. In addition, the Outreach Committee sponsors Move-In Day. This fall semester event assists students as they move into their new homes in the residence halls. Librarians and staff provide students and their families with directions, water, and a helping hand. It always helps to have family support when encouraging students to use the library.

Notes

1. Tierney, B., & Colding, L. K. (2018, November 7). [poster]. Reimagining outreach to faculty and students. Charleston Conference, Charleston, SC.