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"Glad She Was There, Otherwise I Would Have Failed": Student Perceptions of an Embedded Librarian

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Purpose

Embedded librarianship is time-intensive and requires deep collaboration. An Illinois State University librarian was embedded in a nursing research course for many years. To assess students' perspectives of the embedded librarian's value, a research team conducted focus groups. Key areas of exploration included student confidence, literature searches, source evaluation, and student/librarian relationship.

Course Context

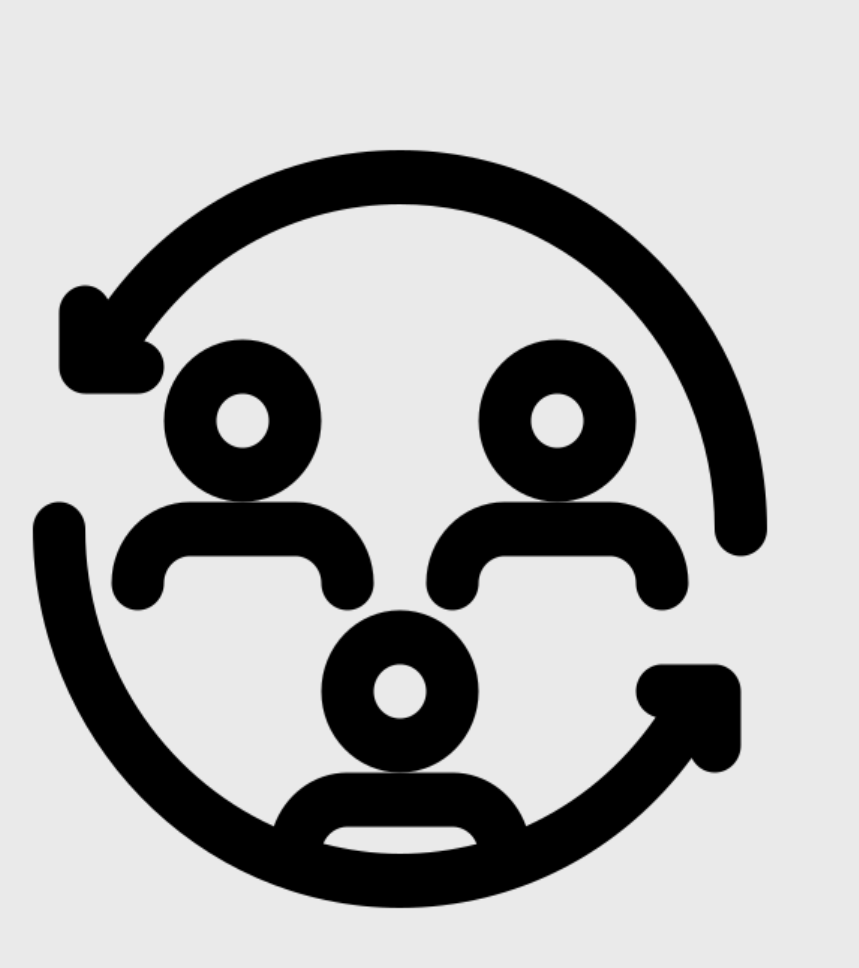
A required undergraduate nursing course focused on evidence-based research included an embedded librarian who:

- Attended class regularly
- Conducted six hours of library instruction
- Met with student groups outside of class
- Graded a research-based assignment
- Served as a point of contact for students and partnered with instructor

Methodology

- Twenty-four students from the nursing research course participated in five focus groups over Zoom.
- Participants were awarded an incentive for sharing their experience.
- Students were asked a series of questions about their experience in the course.
- A researcher summarized focus group responses and received feedback from participants to ensure accuracy.
- The focus groups were transcribed and coded to identify important and replicated themes for the student experience.

Student Feedback



Relationship with Librarian

"[The librarian] always responded right away so, it made us feel better, if we had a last-minute questions she would still be there to answer. "

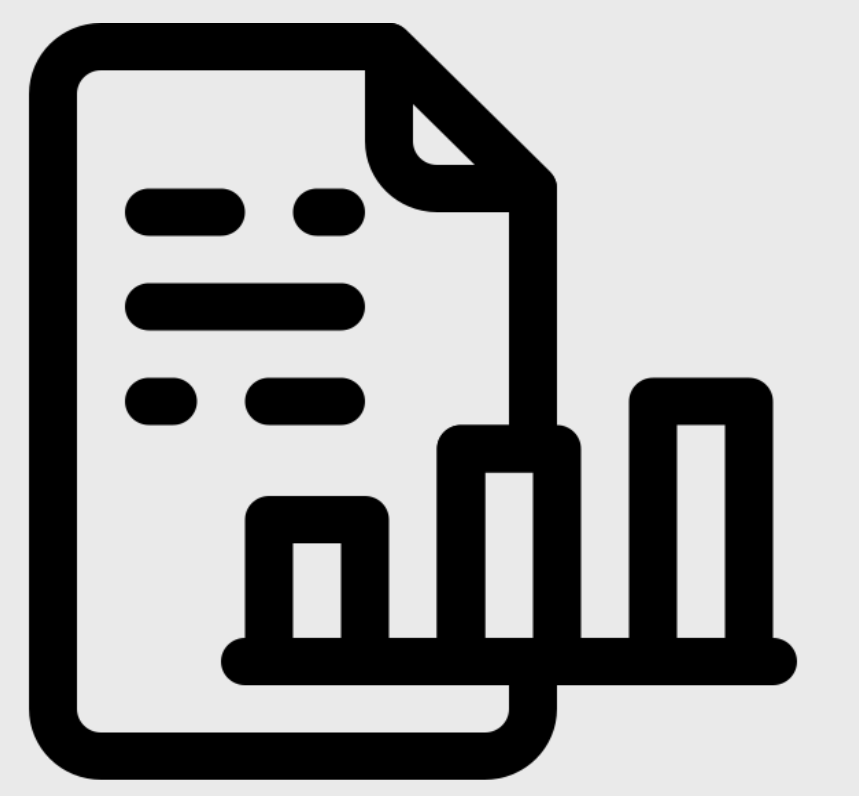
"I feel like once we had [the librarian] there, it was kind of my cue like all right, let's get this going, gotta pay attention!"



Librarian as Expert

"It was nice to have someone that knew those databases and how to navigate them like the back of her hand. If you had something she was like, "Okay, we can go right to it," she didn't have to think about it."

"Not having any experience with any of [the library resources] I felt very lost going into it, so I felt like having an actual librarian someone who knows everything in and out helped a lot, especially as a transfer student."



Learn How to Use Library Resources

"I feel like from the beginning of class to now, I feel I definitely grew in my confidence with finding good credible articles."

"I got more exposure to different databases, I know, someone said this, but I always just went with CINAHL because that's what I felt I knew best, but now that I understand how to make things more specific in the other databases, I can use those for future classes and projects."

Implications

- Students want to:
- Build a relationship with a librarian who is responsive and open
 - Work with a librarian who is an expert in both librarianship and in their course
 - Know how to use library resources to be successful in their courses
 - Understand the defined roles of the librarian and partner instructor
 - Develop skills and relationships that positively impact their future research experiences

Students value having an embedded librarian.

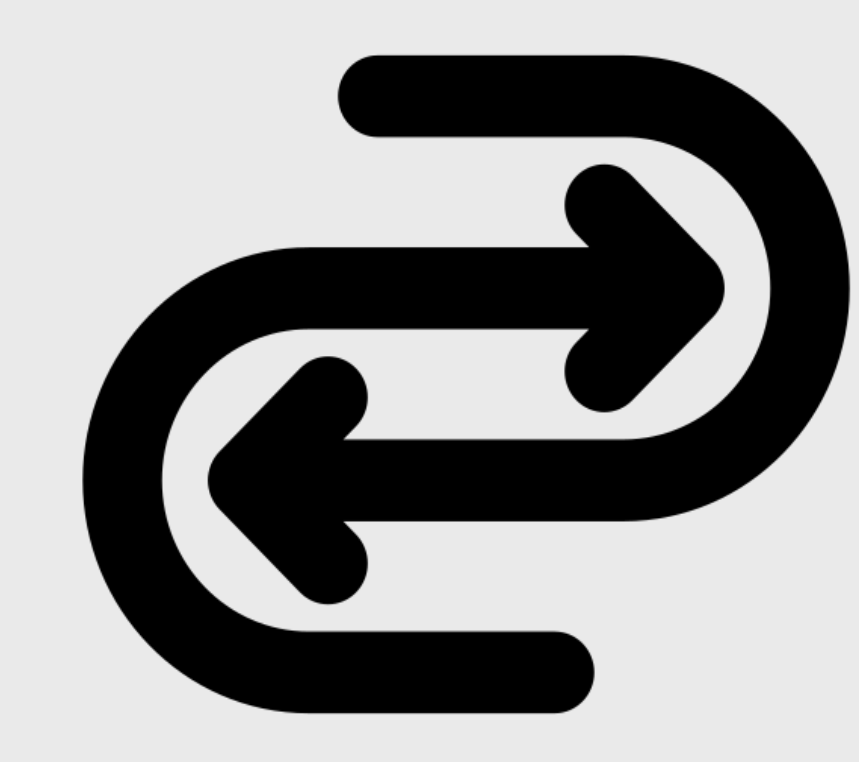
Challenges & Future Plans

Challenges of Focus Groups

- Inconsistent use of follow-up questions
- Student inclination to avoid negativity
- Timing of focus groups; Student memory fades
- Pre-existing relationship with other participants

Future Plans

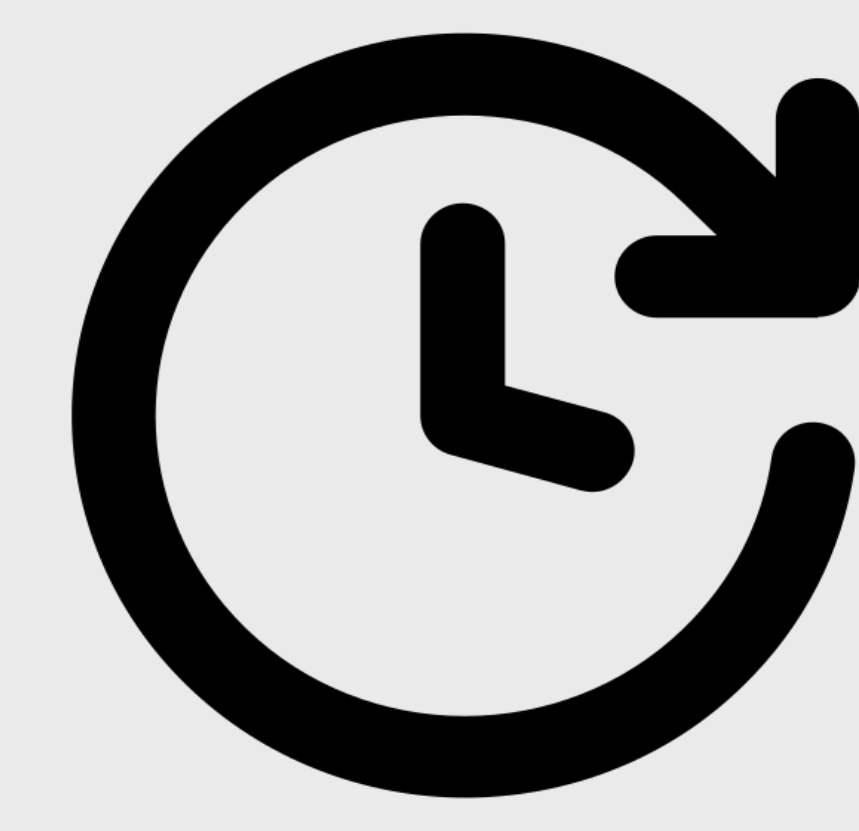
- Researchers are writing up findings for publication
- Course is still being offered and findings will be incorporated into future assessment of embedded librarianship
- Research project is contributing more evidence to exploration of embedded librarianship in other disciplines for student success



Defined Roles

"I do think though that grading was hard with different teachers. I agree with that."

"The reason [the professor] was the one that can tell us if it was a good article or not is because she's the one that graded those assignments, and I feel we could have gone to [the librarian] if we wanted help before submitting them."



Impact on Future Research

"I had another project that I had to do outside of this class for a different class using research, and it was just nice already having that rapport built with [the librarian] because then it was easier for me to come to her with questions about another project."

"I would say the biggest thing I will take away from [the librarian] is... I feel like I could do this again by myself for a different class or in the future for something else I feel like I could do it on my own."

"I would not be doing well in this class so having [the librarian's] guidance is super helpful ... And [the librarian] is here to help me and it's definitely more than a surface level research class, these are transferable skills that I'm definitely going to use in the future."

Student comments have been amended for brevity, but the original intention was retained.

Icons created by Adrien Coquet for the Noun Project.