

## ***Increasing Faculty Access to Global Studies Materials through the Parkland College Library***

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### **Introduction**

There is a trend in Higher Education institutions to internationalize. This process, defined as "integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education," is more relevant than ever as global flows of information, ideas, and people continue to increase the diversity of the student body and the breadth of the material available for consumption (Knight 2004: 6). The global pandemic that the world is reeling under has emphasized the need for an equitable access to technology and learning materials for all students in higher education. It has also cast our global connections—and our need to better understand these connections—into sharp relief.

Parkland College is a community college that serves approximately 9,000 students in East Central Illinois. The mission of the college is to engage the community in learning. The community in the college towns of Champaign-Urbana that house Parkland has become decidedly more international since the dawn of the twenty-first century. In fact, the non-college immigrant population whose points of origin span the globe comprise 16.1% of the urban population in Champaign County (New American Welcome Center Immigrant Report, 2019). Add to this the growth of the international student population at the four-year institutions in Illinois that the majority of Parkland's transfer students move to, and it is not surprising to see

an increase in enrollment of international students and first-generation immigrant students (Office of Institutional Accountability and Research, Parkland College, 2019).

The purpose of our project, when we applied to participate at the University of Illinois' International Studies Research Lab (ISRL), was to explore mechanisms to increase faculty access to global studies materials in our library. After spending time delving into the topic of academic libraries and internationalization, as well as discussing the situation of the Parkland student body, our project has shifted its focus. Our new objective includes strategizing to provide access to global studies library materials for students, with an emphasis on servicing the growing international student population. This brief report provides an outline of some possible strategies to meet these goals, as well as some reflection on what we learned about how to best provide library services on global and international topics to the Parkland community, from both the faculty and the librarian points of view.

### **Background: Global Studies Initiative in Social Sciences, and International Students**

Department of Social Sciences faculty at Parkland College are part of an ongoing initiative to redesign course curricula and add recent global studies scholarship to their courses. This program began in the Fall of 2017 and is expected to end in the Spring of 2021. The initiative is made possible by the area studies centers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) with Title VI funds, and includes the creation of a small collection of global studies research materials at the Parkland College Library (Global Studies Collection LibGuide 2020). As support staff for faculty, library staff have participated in this program since its inception. Librarians and archivists led workshops on the Library's resources and uploaded the teaching materials and revised syllabi from this course redesign to the college's online scholarly repository. One of the conclusions evidenced by this initiative has been that faculty cannot do the work of course redesign without the collaboration of the library staff. It is librarians who most efficiently help instructors procure and access the materials they need to internationalize their classes (Raby 2016).

The Global Studies collection noted here houses reference works primarily for faculty. Community college instructors, unlike their colleagues at four-year institutions, teach primarily introductory courses where textbook editions cannot keep up with the rapid pace of the production of scholarship on fluid and complex global issues. Faculty's heavy teaching and service loads leave little time to read the latest intellectual production in global studies, and few instructors will request specific materials for their courses. The LibGuide can provide a quick way to look up reliable and relevant global scholarship in social sciences, and/or it can serve as a jumping point to other bibliographic searches. In the couple of years since the LibGuide was created, the collection was accessed and used mostly by faculty, and only in a couple of instances did instructors assign some of this material for their students to read and cite. Because of this, one of the goals that we defined in our ISRL discussions was to find a way to get greater use out of these resources by expanding the collection to include works whose target reading population was undergraduates, and that could be easily adopted as assigned course materials.

To determine a collection that would engage as many readers as possible, we believe that the reading materials should not only be picked by faculty for individual courses, but should additionally reflect the diversity of the Parkland international student population as a mechanism to include these students in the Parkland community. Including international students is important given the growing number of students on F-1 Visas at two-year schools. Their experience at community colleges is different from that of four-year universities, as these small colleges will not have some of the services offered by the larger institutions such as housing, work authorizations, and cultural orientation (Friedman 2018). As noted in the introduction to this report, Parkland College has a growing population of international students. At last count over 300 international students were full-time students at Parkland, of which a majority represented China, Korea, Vietnam, Brazil, and half a dozen African nations. This does not include a growing number of international students concurrently enrolled at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Office of Institutional Accountability and Research, Parkland College, 2019). The fact that community colleges are now increasing their international student population is important, as a diverse student body benefits the colleges' culture. A variety of customs and ideas from different cultures and backgrounds contribute to not only increased tolerance, but exposure to different ways of thinking can broaden the horizons of the entire community (Thomas 2019).

At the same time that community colleges are increasing their admission of international students, the rate of attrition of this student population is much higher than that at four-year colleges (Bodine et al. 2020). To help avoid the dropping of classes by these students, it is critical that international students find themselves reflected in the material they read. Indeed, many Parkland social sciences faculty have noted how, to introduce students to material from other world areas, they tie it to student personal experiences. It stands to reason, then, that making global connections between the home countries of the international students and US society would help these international visitors feel more comfortable (Rabin et al. 2016). Providing entertainment material from their home country—such as Japanese manga for East Asian students, or Latin American films for Brazilian and Mexican students—is yet another strategy to help comfort these students who are so far from anything familiar. Having established that international students are important to the wellbeing of our institution, the following section describes the specific tasks we hope to implement to better increase access to global studies materials at the Parkland College Library.

### **Defining the Library's Role and what we can do to increase global studies on our own**

Libraries are considered the main providers of access to different cultures, ideas and knowledge, and are meeting places for people from diverse communities. The role of the library can be thus defined as facilitating social and cultural interaction between citizens with different backgrounds (Nicholson 2017). The Parkland College Library provides up-to-date sources, and it workshops research techniques and fact checking with students. In addition, library staff can also work with individual faculty to design LibGuides to meet the needs of a course, and the Library has a budget for material purchases. In terms of contributing to the internationalization of Parkland, the following list notes some activities and tasks that can be implemented within Parkland Library's existing programs.

1. Increase collections for international studies in the following:
  - In traditional education, or for courses currently taught
  - For specific globalization topics across disciplines (adding to the LibGuide created for the Global Studies initiative)
  - For ESL (course materials chosen for students who take English as a Second Language classes)
  - In popular culture from countries other than the United States, or popular culture and/or entertainment depicting other cultures and societies.
2. Facilitate faculty knowledge of and ability to access collections. Through workshops in the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and as part of the Faculty Academy at Parkland.
3. LibGuides Bibliographies. These bibliographies could be built by library staff for particular topics and regions of the world within global studies. They could also focus on global issues by discipline, for instance, global studies in sociology, history, anthropology, etc.
4. Highlight Academic Honesty. Academic honesty and plagiarism are a growing issue with international students. Many plagiarize due to ignorance, as the concept is not culturally relevant to them. Helping learn about academic honesty best practices, in a culturally sensitive manner, is a task that can be spearheaded by library staff through workshops given to individual courses.
5. Outreach. Parkland College is an integral part of Champaign-Urbana, and its Library and programs are open to the community. The following are some activities that the library could implement to further global studies beyond our institution.
  - Hosting events and tours on different cultures
  - Creating displays about other communities around the world
  - Engaging on social media to educate and inform about global issues

All of the activities noted here are part of the changes and contributions that we can make as part of our institution and on our own. They all fit within what Karen Bordonaro has described as how libraries usually implement services for international students: “giving library instruction for international students, and workshops for library staff, providing resources for individualized English language learning, along with recreational materials in other languages, establishing partnerships on and off campus, building personal connections with international users” (2013: 41). In the above list we seem to have covered all these services, excepting for workshops and training with library staff. For the latter, and to improve on how the library can contribute to Parkland’s internationalization, we must partner with other institutions to complement and further our own efforts, as is described below.

### **Partnering within and across Institutions to increase global studies**

Professional development is an important aspect of the internationalization process in Higher Education. There are several free or inexpensive online webinars and workshops that can provide professional development for librarians and staff interested in helping international students and learning about multiculturalism and globalization (Adeoye and Arome 2020). If libraries are to serve international populations and increase an awareness of global connections, they must train their librarians in acknowledging the multicultural and diverse nature of the populations they serve, and in best engaging students with this diversity. Thus, “international and intercultural opportunities are essential components in educating and training library and information professionals.” (Abdullahi et al. 2017: 11).

Even when done in-house, training can always benefit from engaging with an expert in the topic of the workshop. Creating a collaborative workshop with other community college librarians or requesting a presentation from the area studies librarians at nearby research institutions such as the University of Illinois could be of great benefit. Some examples of possible collaborations between libraries and Area Studies Centers can be found in a presentation report from The Ohio State University (Black et al. 2016). In this presentation, librarians engaged students in novel ways with their library’s course catalog when they partnered with faculty whose courses attempted to increase an awareness of global flows of information. The packaging, selection, and prioritization of information and its global flow reflects how global information prioritizes English—even though more people around the world do not speak English—and how it prioritizes certain types of information. Identifying these formats and forms of selection is key for students and library staff to understand global issues of social justice and diversity.

One particular instance that we identified for the Parkland Library to implement, which we struck upon at the International Studies Research Lab, is the creation of a global studies reader for Social Sciences faculty. That is, we would ask faculty within Social Sciences to recommend a piece of writing, or media, that they use (or could use) to teach about global issues or different regions of the globe and their connections to our society. Parkland’s Library would then house all of these materials in one digital repository that students could access for free with their Parkland Library ID. This would fall in line with the trend seen in academic libraries that are now implementing more open access. Ermina Anghelescu notes that “The academic library concept has evolved from closed stacks and chained books to open stacks, from digital resources available to distance users to open access e-collections that virtual users can utilize anywhere, anytime” (2019: xxii). Indeed, open access is key for community college students for whom the cost-effectiveness of these schools is a huge incentive for enrollment (Zhou 2020).

In short, the Parkland Library hopes to expand on the following collaborations to further the internationalization of our institution:

- Continuing to embed library instruction into the Global Studies curriculum
- Engaging faculty in the selection of new resources
- Building the repository of Global Studies research with the area studies centers at UIUC
- Seeking faculty buy-in for information literacy tools: ie, LibGuides

- Implementing the ideas garnered at ISRL

## Conclusion

Academic librarians and faculty have a long history of working together, and it is the research tools provided by library staff that make institutions of higher education so successful in inspiring young minds and imparting knowledge. The participation of the two authors of this report in the International Studies Research Lab has cemented the objectives of the Global Studies Initiative at Parkland so that it will continue to provide reference materials with the latest research material on international work, while simultaneously helping faculty to curate material that can be used in introductory undergraduate courses to familiarize students with global processes and connections. The weeks of research and reflection have also evidenced the growing need for reference and course materials for our expanding population of international students, and how these materials can contribute to the retention and success of this group within our community.

Our conversations and research on access to global studies material highlighted how designing a more robust global studies collection and increasing access to digital materials is but one piece of an institutional push for internationalization. Moreover, we found that this contribution is key when dealing with a teaching-centered institution such as Parkland. Our research yielded that library-accessible scholarship on global issues, if categorized and curated correctly, can provide invaluable help to the pedagogy and learning of global issues and international connections in the classroom. We strongly believe that we best serve Parkland College faculty and students when these materials are easily and habitually incorporated in both teaching and the production of knowledge. Our goals and tasks for a proposed library strategy now feature a more holistic approach for students and faculty, taking into consideration the particular needs of our community college.

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