

TEACHING THE TEACHERS

DEVELOPING A TEACHING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS

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Introduction

Job ads for academic librarians consistently mention, for those in public service, roles in instruction of users, and often, for those in technical services positions, mention roles in training for library staff.¹ The “Draft College and University Professional Association Position Descriptions for Academic Libraries”² list teaching, instruction, and training with surprising regularity. Librarians, new and veteran, are expected to have skills in teaching and training and to understand how people learn and what motivates learning.

Many library schools have developed stand-alone instruction-related courses.³ Despite these offerings, many newly graduated librarians did not take these courses, perhaps not realizing that instruction would be a component of their future jobs, and those already in the field often did not have the opportunity to do so. The Immersion Program offered by the Association of College and Research Libraries through its Institute for Information Literacy has filled the gap for some through its Teacher Track, but many libraries cannot afford its steep registration fees.⁴ In addition, instructional improvement programs have long been offered in specific institutions, and several attempts have been made to summarize and describe them. Alice Clark, over 20 years ago, reported on a survey of programs in ARL libraries,⁵ and Scott Walter and Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe updated this information several years ago.⁶ Priscilla Atkins and Catherine E. Freirichs describe a process used to develop in-house programming, very much like those at other institutions.⁷ Programs like the Instructor College at University of Michigan, instruction in-services at The Ohio State University Libraries, “Tips

and Techniques for Library Instruction” at the University of Texas Libraries, the very theoretically grounded staff development initiative at Queensland University of Technology, and “teacher meetings” at the University of Washington-Bothell all recognize that training and continual development of instructional skills are important to the development of instructional programs in academic libraries.⁸

Professional development is an important responsibility not only for individual librarians but also for academic libraries.⁹ The term *instructional improvement* is used by Paulsen and Feldman to describe the practice of offering professional development activities for college instructors that help them improve their performance in the classroom.¹⁰ Academic librarians have these classroom and instructional professional development needs as well.

This case study will examine the programs and workshops of the University Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as it attempts to orient approximately 100 librarians to their instructional roles and to meet the continuing education needs of the University Library’s instructional staff, which includes librarians as well as support staff and a contingent of approximately 60 graduate assistants enrolled in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science working in preprofessional public services positions.

Institutional Environment

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a land grant public institution in a nonurban environment. The institution is considered a research-extensive institution according to the Carnegie Classification.¹¹ As such, there is an important emphasis on scholarship for faculty. Although teaching and service are important criteria in promotion and tenure, the overriding factor is the level of research and publication. Librarians have faculty status and professorial rank at Illinois and face the same expectations as other faculty for tenure and promotion decisions. Consequently, in addition to high levels of involvement in national service through association committee service and presentations at conferences, excellence in research and scholarship in the form of published papers, articles, chapters in books, and monographs is expected in both annual review and tenure and promotion processes. In addition to its emphasis on research, the university has been pursuing

initiatives related to quality undergraduate education for a number of years. The institution sees its role as a leader in research, teaching, and public engagement in pursuit of its vision to “become the preeminent public research institution.”¹²

In order to serve the needs of its faculty and research students, the library developed into a multilibrary system, with over 40 departmental libraries distributed in more than 25 buildings across the campus. There is a legend, which exemplifies the value of decentralized library services, in which the chemistry library became the first departmental library because by the time a chemistry faculty member ran across campus to check some data in a reference book, the experiment in his lab had failed. Consequently the current system of collections based on subject disciplines being housed separately, and often within the building with offices of the faculty being served, was established. Though evolving through the University Library’s New Service Model Programs initiative,¹⁴ changes being made are guided by a commitment to “retaining the greatest strengths of the departmental library service model.”¹⁵

Because fewer than half of the departmental libraries were housed within the main building, and because of the characteristics of librarian faculty status at Illinois, an environment that recognized individual autonomy and authority developed, and individual librarians developed unique strategies and approaches to providing services to their clientele.

Organization of User Education at Illinois

With a history of great emphasis on collection development and support of faculty research needs, as well as the concomitant unique and varied approaches to collection development and reference services, it is no surprise that a systematic approach to user education within the library system has been slow to develop. The Undergraduate Library focuses on students in the first and second years of college, primarily working with writing-intensive and speech communication courses that fulfill the basic composition requirement. Subject librarians serve the courses in their colleges or departments and have had mixed successes with integrating information literacy into research-intensive courses.

In the mid-1980s, a loosely knit group of librarians from across the campus met for lunch once a month to discuss bibliographic issues. No

formal committee existed until 1986, when the OPAC User Education Committee was created. This committee focused specifically on user instruction workshops and handouts for the new online catalog. Gradually, responsibilities for CD-ROM databases, end-user searching, and Web-based indexes were assigned to this group, with the committee taking on an increasingly comprehensive charge and developing basic instructional materials for the library's webpages in 1995. Though much was accomplished through the committee, eventually renamed the User Education Committee, the revolving nature of committee membership and competing demands on committee members' time hampered the development of instructional leadership for the library as a whole.

A Coordinator for Information Literacy Services and Instruction, reporting to the Associate University Librarian for Services, was hired in 2002 and charged to lead efforts to develop a more systematized approach to offering instruction. Initial steps in the development of the information literacy program included taking stock of existing instructional efforts, identifying unserved and underserved groups, providing support for librarians teaching instruction sessions or developing instructional materials, and selecting strategic directions for short- and long-term efforts. Developing instructional facilities was another important aspect that needed to be addressed to improve instructional efforts by librarians, as librarians repeatedly stated they were hampered in developing instruction programs by not having spaces in which to teach. In addition, the coordinator was charged to "nurture the professional development of librarians as educators and serve as a resource person for library faculty and staff in this area... the Coordinator will ensure that library staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide information literacy instruction and other services at the highest level possible."¹⁶ A year after the Coordinator for Information Literacy was hired, the University Library also appointed a Coordinator for Staff Development and Training, a key position in helping with the developing instructional improvement program.

To create a foundation for the information literacy program and a common understanding throughout the University Library of instructional goals, the coordinator worked with the User Education Committee to develop guiding documents for the program—specifically

a vision statement and a statement on learning goals. User education services are guided by a vision that states:

The Information Literacy Services and Instruction programs offered by the University Library teach library users to identify, retrieve, evaluate, judge, use and value information and information tools while attending to the legal and ethical considerations involved in doing so. The services and programs are developed in a strategic and systematic manner but are expected to vary in approach and composition of strategies utilized based on curriculum needs, user skills and experiences, and library resources. Methods in use include formal group instruction, including course-integrated sessions, credit courses, and open workshops; individual one-to-one instruction; and independent learning opportunities including both print and web-based point-of-use instructional materials. Librarians collaborate with campus faculty and staff to develop instruction that is responsive to teaching and learning needs and furthers the development of student information literacy. The programs are characterized by assessment of student learning outcomes and systematic program evaluation and particular attention is paid to identifying unserved and underserved groups.¹⁷

The University Library's "Statement on Learning Goals" incorporates both the "Model Statement of Objectives for Academic Bibliographic Instruction" and the "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education" in order to provide frameworks for developing learning goals.¹⁸

Objectives for the Instructional Improvement Program

The unique environment of the Illinois Library—decentralized libraries, a highly autonomous library faculty, and many staff and graduate assistants also teaching but without any central instruction unit beyond the Coordinator for Information Literacy Services and Instruction and one graduate assistant—led to the approach adopted by the University Library in providing support for librarians developing themselves as teachers. The focus is on creating opportunities for development rather

than a set curriculum or a mandate for attendance at specific functions. As such, the instructional improvement program is one that focuses on “continual growth that anticipates and complements the evolving information needs of our institutions and of society”¹⁹ and is at the same time sensitive to and reflective of the University Library organization structure and culture.

The library hopes to improve librarians’ teaching and to establish a community of teachers who can provide mutual support and feedback by always considering instructional improvement from the perspective of library faculty members who are choosing to better their skills and abilities. Training and development related to teaching is not part of a remedial or annual evaluation system. This program for teaching improvement shares the goals of the University of Michigan’s Instructor College:

- fostering interest and enthusiasm
- encouraging reflection and creativity in teaching
- improving confidence in teaching abilities
- improving knowledge and skills in teaching
- understanding the impact of teaching on student learning
- changing work practices
- creating a community and developing, maintaining, and strengthening social networks among those involved
- formalizing library instruction as the ultimate goal²⁰

The Illinois Library’s “Vision for Information Literacy Services and Instruction” specifically states that “library faculty and staff have opportunities to participate in professional development opportunities that improve their instructional skills and understanding of student learning,”²¹ and this is an integral component of achieving the vision for the library. Librarians and other instructional staff are encouraged to participate in offerings through the library itself, the Teaching Alliance (a joint program of the University Library and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science), the university, and consortia and professional organizations.

Library Offerings

Opportunities for developing baseline skills and knowledge are the foundation for the instructional improvement program within the

University Library. Without such knowledge and skills, instructors will not be able to further their own abilities and will struggle with logistical basics, impeding their own effectiveness.

The “Checklist for New Librarians and Others with Teaching Responsibilities: Information Literacy” is the foundational document for orienting those responsible for provision of instruction. It recognizes that the decentralized nature of the institution and the autonomous culture would not ensure that new librarians received the information they needed to be successful instructors. The Coordinator for Information Literacy Services and Instruction worked with the User Education Committee to develop this checklist, which the coordinator reviews with new librarians to orient them to roles of individuals, continuing education opportunities, existing programs, and resources. See the appendix for this checklist.

In contrast, graduate assistants are trained to provide instruction within their own library units by the librarians in the unit. As a complement to this, an overview presentation, “Teaching and Learning in Academic Libraries,” is given once a year to provide background information for those who do not have instructional components for the assistantships or who wish additional training. The Undergraduate Library and the Reference Library have held initial discussions regarding how they might cooperate to develop a more robust approach to training graduate assistants since graduate assistants have specific and rather extensive assigned instructional responsibilities in each unit.

Library/GSLIS Teaching Alliance

In addition to offerings within the library, librarians and instructional staff can also attend programs offered by the Teaching Alliance, a joint program of the university’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) and the University Library, which provides professional development programs related to teaching to both librarians and library and information science professors, as well as doctoral and master’s degree students in library and information science. Events offered through the Teaching Alliance have formed the bulk of the instruction improvement workshops sponsored by the University Library.

The Teaching Alliance sponsored two to three events per semester from its inception in 2001 until 2005, when regularly allocated campus

funding was changed to a grant program and programming slowed to one to two events per semester. With the appointment of new leadership for the Teaching Alliance in fall 2008, including a liaison from the campus Center for Teaching Excellence, and a reconsidered funding model, programming is projected to grow and return to former levels.

An initial retreat, inspired by Anna Litten's work,²² provided the foundation for the collaborative programming. During a lunchtime discussion facilitated by the Library and Information Science Librarian, retreat participants brainstormed topics for future sessions, which gave participants the opportunity to share their interests and needs regarding professional development topics. The choice of events centered around improving confidence in teaching abilities, improving knowledge and skills in teaching, and understanding the impact of teaching on student learning. Many of the topics highlighted in the "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education"²³ were topics of discussion, including encouraging contact between students and faculty, encouraging active learning, giving prompt feedback, communicating high expectations, and respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. This framework provides a useful approach to organizing a summary of the events as it is more reflective of themes pursued since 2001 than a chronological approach would be.

Encourage Contact between Students and Faculty

According to educational research, frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement,²⁴ but librarians were not comfortable using technology to make that contact. Christine Jenkins and Jill Gengler, both of the library school, addressed teaching with technology in a session entitled "Teaching in an Electronic Classroom." They shared information and teaching strategies that related to teaching with various modes of technology. A large part of the presentation focused on the technology used for real-time distance education classes within GSLIS. A handout summarized technology available in GSLIS to support distance teaching and learning and described the advantages of each type of technology. The session reviewed different forms of synchronous and asynchronous technologies that support classroom work.

A second event on the same topic provided a more hands-on view

of specific techniques for teaching in an electronic classroom that would be applicable for both library and GSLIS faculty. In a computer classroom, Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, at that time working at Illinois State University, presented a session on general considerations for teaching in a computer lab. The content covered sight lines, layout of the room, and principles for effective presentation in a computer lab setting rather than specific software or technology usage.

Encourage Active Learning

Active learning refers to a wide range of teaching and learning activities that require or encourage students to do more than sit passively and listen. Chickering and Gamson suggest that beyond listening, students must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems.²⁵ “Most important, to be actively involved, students must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.”²⁶

A two-part series, led by Dean Papajohn of the campus Office of Instructional Resources, was offered on effective lecturing. The first session was devoted to presentation and discussion of the principles and strategies of effective lecturing, while the second session gave participants an opportunity to teach a minilesson for eight minutes and receive peer feedback. Most participants attended both sessions and participated in the microteaching. In the first session, the basics of lecturing were reviewed as well as hints for preparing and delivering lectures that actively involve learners. The goal for the session was to review the features and strategies of lectures, including defining lecture objectives, profiling audiences, distinguishing between weak and strong openings, creating relevant examples, determining appropriate organizational structures, and practicing delivery skills. In pairs, the participants discussed how lecturers and learners can be active or inactive. The group suggested that active lecturers ask questions, are flexible and change course based on students’ questions, supplement talking with visuals and hands-on experiences, show enthusiasm, cultivate interest in the topic, guide students in preparing before class so there is knowledge upon which to build, consider the sequence of what is to be learned, provide feedback to gauge comprehension, think through assignments and prepare compelling questions before class, demonstrate current knowledge of the topic, and prepare current and relevant examples.

Active students are seen as those who make eye contact, ask questions, contribute ideas and experiences, make connections, take notes, and participate in group discussions and student presentations.

Distinguished Teacher/Scholar Jim Gentry from the College of Commerce and GSLIS faculty member Pat Lawton presented an interactive session to outline some of the qualities of an exemplary teacher. With Jim Gentry as facilitator and participants divided into a group of “students” and a group of observers, Pat Lawton taught a minilesson, which Jim then analyzed for aspects of exemplary teaching. A very popular and effective teacher at GSLIS, Pat used a variety of teaching techniques to engage the “students” in the learning process as she demonstrated a host of exemplary teaching strategies. During the debriefing session facilitated by Jim, observers commented on the level of engagement of the “students” and the effectiveness of using concrete models in representing the abstract ideas of classification, which was the theme of the minilesson. Following the debriefing session, participants broke into small groups for further discussion over lunch. Facilitators from the campus Office of Instructional Resources were present so that each roundtable had a discussant to lead a dialogue on the principles and practices of effective teaching.

Developed in response to the requests of a number of participants, a workshop was designed to provide small-group instruction on the basics of HTML coding with the aim of being able to post teaching materials on the Web. With such a small-group approach, individualized instruction was possible. Jeni Weidenbenner, the Teaching Alliance graduate assistant, began with a brief overview of considerations for basic Web design and then facilitated a workshop where participants could work on their own HTML projects. The basic presentation was posted on a website, and the URL was disseminated to interested people who were unable to attend the workshop. During the session, one participant chose to work on a basic website for her library, while another participant worked on a personal homepage. The diversity of goals for Web design was well suited to the atmosphere of individualized instruction.

Give Prompt Feedback

Feedback is the teacher’s way of communicating with students, and it is

key to helping the student learn. According to Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, teachers should provide feedback that is informational rather than controlling, based on agreed-upon standards, specific and constructive, quantitative, prompt, frequent, positive, and personal and differential.²⁷

Sandra Finley, Education Specialist at the campus Center for Teaching Excellence (formerly named the Office of Instructional Resources), led a workshop entitled “Keeping Your Ship on Course: How to Use Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs).” Several exercises were administered during the discussion, and handouts outlining some of the major CATs were distributed.

A follow-up session, “Create a Classroom Assessment Technique,” was facilitated by Teaching Alliance coordinators Linda Smith (GSLIS) and Lisa Hinchliffe (library). Participants were asked ahead of time to think of ways in which they would like to implement CATs in their instructional program. The session then attempted as far as possible to present some practical considerations and highlight three techniques that would best suit the needs expressed: Background Knowledge Probe, One-Minute Paper, and Classroom Opinion Poll.²⁸

Communicate High Expectations

Research has shown that expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, having direct impact upon student learning,²⁹ and that how these expectations are communicated is important.³⁰

Communicating these expectations was the focus of other sessions. For the Teaching Alliance’s first online, synchronous event, a small group facilitated by Linda Smith discussed issues of academic integrity and brainstormed approaches to preventing cheating and confronting cheaters. Initial discussion considered the university’s academic code, for which all students are responsible, as well as the range of infractions of the code (e.g., cheating, fabrication, facilitating infractions, and plagiarism).

Participants decided that the chat conversation would focus on plagiarism, the inherent pitfalls of dealing with such infractions, and options for instructing students about how to avoid plagiarism, for which it was noted that instructors can exercise authority and discretion in handling infractions. Much of the discussion focused on the inability of students to distinguish fair use from plagiarism in many

cases. The group considered options for educating students about academic writing, in particular the utility of creating a tutorial for new students (including master's level students). The discussion focused on the creation of assignments that minimize a student's ability to plagiarize. As a whole, the group agreed that creative writing assignments like autobiographies were most useful in avoiding instances of plagiarism but noted that traditional research projects could also be framed in a way that would minimize opportunities for plagiarism (e.g., requiring drafts during the writing process). Furthermore, resources exist to aid instructors in uncovering instances of plagiarism.

In concluding the session, participants reiterated the need for effective awareness and prevention programs on campus, including ways to make students more aware of the code. Additionally, several participants mentioned that citation requirements differ by discipline (e.g., journalism vs. history) and the need to change campus culture without making librarians appear as if they are the citation police. Participants also raised the possibility of organizing a formal campus initiative to support plagiarism detection (with librarians aiding instructors in uncovering instances of student plagiarism) and the need for "just in time" instruction. Collectively, the group agreed that the focus should be on prevention rather than detection.

Respect Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning

While there has been much recent debate on the validity of learning styles, which suggest that people have preferred ways of learning and that teachers should adapt their teaching to address these preferences, both supporters and detractors agree that classes are composed of a variety of people and that understanding who these people are and how they learn can help improve teaching.³¹

Early on, the Teaching Alliance sponsored a workshop led by Beth Woodard that focused on learning styles. Participants in the workshop took the *Kolb Learning Style Inventory*,³² followed by a debriefing of the inventory and its implications for teaching. Participants then created sample instructional sessions that addressed a variety of learning styles.

A panel presentation with discussion, "Who Are Our Students?" started with Dean of Students William Riley presenting a timeline of demographics, attitudes, behavior, and interests of incoming students

of recent years, up to about 10 years ago. Panelists, including Riley; Jordan Seymour, a former Illinois undergraduate and then GSLIS master's degree student; and Dana Wright, Assistant Undergraduate Librarian for Diversity Services, explored issues surrounding the needs of those students. Questions were invited after the presentations, and a lively discussion ensued, addressing issues specific to the interests of the participants. Three handouts were provided: "University of Illinois Student Profile Quiz," "Profile of John Doe, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 'Model' Student," and a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Illinois Student Profile."

A third event focusing on diverse talents and ways of learning was led by Arlette Ingram Willis, Associate Head of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. She showed a video and then led a discussion on "Teaching a Diverse Population."

Caroline Haythornthwaite, co-editor of the then recently published "Internet in Everyday Life," led a discussion that centered around "The Internet Goes to College: How Students Are Living in the Future with Today's Technology."³³ Internet links to the report and suggested questions were provided before the event, and hard copies of the report were also on hand during the event.

Chip Bruce of the GSLIS faculty presented an event entitled "What Do We Know about Undergraduate Learning?" which addressed the developmental theory of learning as it relates to undergraduates. This was followed with a discussion session on how experts differ from novices, facilitated by GSLIS-Library Teaching Alliance coordinators Linda Smith and Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe. Discussed was "How Experts Differ from Novices," a chapter from the book *How People Learn*.³⁴ The Internet link to the online book was provided before the event, and hard copies of the chapter were on hand as participants entered the room.

Reflective Practice

Donald Schon's articulation of reflective practice, whereby one considers one's own knowledge and experience at the same time as being coached or mentored by an experienced professional, has had a profound influence on teacher education and improvement programs.³⁵ The work of Stephen Brookfield further explored the importance of

critical reflection to improve teaching and learning.³⁶ Peer coaching, creating teaching portfolios, and the use of action research are all techniques that help improve reflective practice.

Peer coaching uses the same process as evaluation, using preconference, observation, and postconference, but peer coaches do not evaluate; they use the observation opportunity to gather data and start a professional dialogue to help improve teaching.³⁷ Some libraries have also instituted this process as an evaluative method for documenting the quality of teaching for promotion purposes.³⁸

Kirby Barrick, from the College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, led a session on “Peer Observation of Teaching.” Kirby presented strategies for making these peer observations positive by providing constructive feedback for change. His focus was on a voluntary process that would not be used for evaluative purposes. Unfortunately, the next logical step of creating peer groups was stymied by being unable to create appropriate groups. This remains a project the group would like to revisit in the future.

The creation of teaching portfolios encourages the articulation of a teaching philosophy and asks teachers to provide evidence of the effectiveness of their teaching. Judith Arnold and K. B. Pearson wrote one of the first descriptions of how this process can be applied by librarians.³⁹ Jane Tuttle further explored the use of teaching portfolios, highlighting how the process can illuminate areas about which library instructors may not have awareness.⁴⁰

A presentation and discussion on “The Ins and Outs of Teaching Portfolios” was led by Beth S. Woodard, then Central Information Services Librarian. Based upon a workshop presented at an ACRL conference, this workshop featured discussion about the purposes for which portfolios can be used; reflective writing on teaching philosophy; brainstorming evidence of teaching performance, philosophy, and practice; and highlights of assessment techniques. A follow-up session for feedback on teaching philosophy statements was offered at a later date.

“What Kind of Teacher Are You? Models from the Movies” was presented by Jane Alsberg and Laura Hahn from the campus Center for Teaching Excellence and provided a light-hearted but deeply engaging approach to discussing difficult teaching issues and student learning challenges. Clips from *Mona Lisa Smile*, *Dead Poets Society*, *Finding*

Forrester, and other films were used to highlight teacher effectiveness and identify particular characteristics and approaches that can be incorporated into teaching in libraries.

The use of action research is another technique that helps improve instruction through the facilitation of reflective practice. The presentation and discussion of “Action Research as a Methodology for Inquiry” was facilitated by Ann Bishop, associate professor, GSLIS, who described a project entitled “Community Inquiry and LIS.” The presentation outlined definitions and examples of participatory action research, participatory evaluation, appreciative inquiry, and service learning. These approaches to inquiry involve learners to a greater degree than more experimental methods and can be easier for librarians to implement in their teaching environments.

“The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Unmasked” was facilitated by guest Kathleen McKinney, Cross Chair in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and professor of sociology at Illinois State University. Prior to the event, an article entitled “The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Past Lessons, Current Challenges, and Future Visions”⁴¹ was distributed in order to provide a common point of entry among participants. Discussion topics for small groups included these:

- What Is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) in Higher Education?
- Research Methods for Doing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
- Ethical Issues in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Copies of all handouts were sent to interested persons who were unable to attend. Kathleen McKinney also donated several books to the Teaching Alliance to be used as SoTL resources.

Campus Opportunities

Librarians and instructional staff are also able to take advantage of the campus Center for Teaching Excellence, which provides resources, training, and consulting services related to teaching and learning.⁴² In addition to the workshops mentioned above that have been offered through the Teaching Alliance and the new liaison to the Teaching Alliance, the center offers additional workshops open to all campus

instructors on a variety of topics including metaphors, concept mapping, storytelling, grading, creating tests, connecting learning theories to classroom activities, writing teaching philosophy statements, and syllabus development.

The center also sponsors an annual Faculty Retreat on Active Learning, a one-day event to which all Illinois faculty are invited to learn more about teaching from a nationally known keynote speaker and concurrent and poster sessions featuring local faculty. These events have been held since 1995, and librarian attendance has been steadily increasing. Librarians have also presented sessions about their own teaching projects and recently have also had a resource table showing how the library supports campus faculty in their teaching.

Beginning in fall 2004, as a follow-up to the 2003 Faculty Retreat, which featured Lee Schulman speaking on the scholarship of teaching and learning, the Center for Teaching Excellence has been holding discussions during the academic year on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as a systematic investigation into issues of student learning, bridging the acts of teaching and research. Librarians have been active participants since its inception and the Coordinator for Information Literacy Services and Instruction serves on the advisory board for the SoTL group.

Librarians also participate in and present at the campus's Faculty Summer Institute, a four-day conference sponsored by the campus Educational Technologies group and the Illinois Online Network.⁴⁴ This conference offers more than 50 presentations, including hands-on workshops, forums, poster sessions, keynotes, and roundtable discussions, for those interested in the application of Web-based technologies to the teaching and learning process and in the planning, administration, and management of online education programs.

The codirectors of the Teaching Alliance also serve as members of the campus Teaching Academy Leadership Network (TALN), a grassroots group of the leaders of the teaching academies in the colleges across campus. Through TALN, the codirectors share information with other instructional improvement leaders on campus and gain ideas for implementation in the Teaching Alliance. In 2008–2009, TALN sponsored a Diversity in the Classroom workshop..

Instructional Development Opportunities in the Profession

The main consortium impacting instructional librarians at Illinois is CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois), a consortium of all the academic libraries within the state. In its previous iterations, this group typically held forums twice a year focusing on public services aspects of using the statewide online catalog. Instructional applications beyond the catalog were generally not discussed. After the reorganization of the consortium, CARLI has been taking a more proactive role and sponsored an ACRL Institute for Information Literacy Regional Immersion Program in summer 2007 with 46 attendees, three of whom were from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In fall 2006, CARLI also began holding forums that focus on information literacy and instruction and now has a very active instruction team.⁴⁵

The Coordinator for Information Literacy Services and Instruction has also obtained a commitment from the library administration for regular funding for attendance at the Institute for Information Literacy Immersion Program each year. At present, Illinois has had five attendees in program track, five in teacher track, and one each in intentional teacher and the assessment programs. These four tracks focus on different areas:

- teacher track on teaching techniques for those librarians new to teaching
- program track on coordinating and leading instruction programs
- intentional teacher on development opportunities for experienced teachers
- assessment on improving knowledge and practice of both classroom and program assessment

Four librarian hires have attended immersion prior to being hired, and two University Library faculty are faculty in the immersion program.

Library funding has also been set aside for attendance at other instruction conferences, for example, LOEX (Library Orientation Exchange), LOEX-of-the-West, and WILU (Workshop on Instruction in Library Use), as well as other higher education conferences that focus

on student learning and instructional improvement, such as those put on by the American Association of Colleges and Universities and the Educause Learning Initiative. Librarians are also eligible to apply for additional campus funds to supplement internal travel money for attendance at instructional conferences.

Conclusions

Over the past two or three decades, instruction has evolved at Illinois from a concern of a small committee and the Undergraduate Library to a core service responsibility for all public service and subject liaison librarians in a transition similar to that of public services positions throughout the country. With the creation of the position of Coordinator for Information Literacy Services and Instruction came the opportunity and expectation for the development of an instructional improvement program supporting the librarians and other instructional staff. As the professional development offerings for instructional improvement expanded, the User Education Committee also created a subcommittee, the Professional Development Working Group, to help guide and further the growth of the instructional improvement offerings. The working group is also fortunate to have the guidance of the relatively newly disseminated ACRL “Standards for Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians and Coordinators”⁴⁶ in identifying areas of need.

By indicators of participation numbers and positive evaluations, the instructional improvement program of the University Library has enjoyed great success. Program evaluations indicate that participants appreciate the variety of topics addressed, the variety of presenters who have led sessions, careful attention to logistics (e.g., starting and ending on time, provision of snacks and beverages, and Web-based registration for events), and how responsive the selection of topics has been to instructional needs. These strategies are reflective of the overall philosophy of the program—to create opportunities for development, not a mandated one-size-fits-all prescription.

While successful, however, the University Library still has many ways to further develop its instructional improvement programs. Little assessment of the program has investigated the impact of the offerings—for example, do librarians change their teaching approaches, do they incorporate new techniques, are they more reflective in their

practice, or have they adopted a focus on student learning outcomes? In addition, some librarians attend most of the sessions and many attend none, so there is a need to engage a broader group of participants as well as identify experts in particular instructional improvement areas beyond the Coordinator for Information Literacy who might be called upon more one-on-one for consultations and assistance. Building a local instructional community that encompasses all who have instructional responsibilities is the guarantee that everyone is able to engage their instructional responsibilities successfully and in personally fulfilling ways.

Notes

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APPENDIX

CHECKLIST FOR NEW LIBRARIANS AND OTHERS WITH TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES: INFORMATION LITERACY

- Role of Coordinator for Information Literacy Services and Instruction, Office of Services, and the Relationship between Coordinator and Library Units
- User Education Committee (<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/committee/usered>)
- Library Instruction Reporting and Unit Annual Reports
- Professional Development Opportunities
 - GSLIS-Library Teaching Alliance and Campus Teaching Academies
 - Active Learning Retreat
 - PITA Grants
 - ILL-L Listserv
 - ACRL Instruction Section
 - LOEX Resources
- General Programs
 - New Student Week Tours
 - Library Fall Festival
 - Virtual Tours
 - Undergraduate Library Programs
- Instructional Materials and Resources
 - Statement on Learning Goals
 - Information Literacy Vision Statement
 - GEN Handouts
 - Library Brochure
 - Information Literacy Website
- Equipment and Facilities
 - Classrooms
 - Portable Instruction Unit

THE EXPERT LIBRARY

STAFFING, SUSTAINING, AND ADVANCING THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

edited by

Scott Walter and Karen Williams

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