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Moving Beyond One-Shot Library Instruction – One College at a Time

In a perfect world, library instruction would be an integrated, formal part of the curriculum at all academic institutions. In reality, though, many of us are making do as best we can with ad hoc, one-shot business research instruction, promoting our services and nurturing relationships with individual faculty in order to secure more face time with business students.

The disadvantages of ad hoc instruction have been amply covered in the literature. One particularly exasperating result is that many students are never reached, while other students are reached a few times too many, in sessions that cover familiar ground. Reinforcement may be a good thing, but repetition is not.

As a new librarian who graduated in August 2006, I learned this lesson quickly. I began providing my first business research instruction to the Harmon College of Business Administration (HCBA), University of Central Missouri in January 2007. By the start of the Spring 2008 semester, just one year later, the problem began to manifest. At the beginning of sessions, when I asked how many students had been in a session with me previously, as many as one-third of the class were raising their hands. Clearly, something needed to be done.

At one such session, a professor suggested remedying the problem by centering my sessions on a single course taken by all or most business students. Brilliant! MGT3325 (Business Communications) was quickly identified as a core course common to almost all of the degree programs offered by HCBA. While a few students inevitably wait until their final semester to take this course, most do so in their junior year   after they have declared their major, but still with three or four semesters remaining of discipline-specific studies.

Rather than apply to the numerous instructors of this core course individually, I approached the project more strategically. I realized that, with the right champion behind the concept, a case could be made for making library instruction a required degree component for all HCBA majors.

Not all MGT3325 instructors were initially enthused at having a new course component imposed on them, but they all complied.

The required business research sessions are held outside of class time, and are offered throughout the semester on differing days of the week and varying times of day. Students sign up for any session time that works for them via an online registration system. They are provided a business-card sized certificate to submit to their professor as proof of session completion. The

travel once per semester and lead library sessions inside of class time for these course sections.

I built upon this fledgling program over the following semesters by adding three related, complementary program components:

1. Required sessions for all students enrolled in either MKT1400 or BADM1400, popular first year seminars for those with an early interest in the business field).

2. Required sessions for economics majors, the only degree program in HCBA that does not require completion of MGT3325.

3. Advanced library sessions tailored to individual courses (e.g., instruction in using Research Insight software).

Within just a few semesters, fewer hands were going up when I asked whether students had been in a session with me before   and if they *had* been in a session previously, it was for one of the complementary program components.

Although the initial driver was to reduce session redundancy and reach students more consistently, I realized   somewhat after the fact   that I had built a formalized, distributed program of business bibliographic instruction for the business school. I had moved beyond the dreaded "one-shot B.I.", and repetition had been vanquished.

This formalized instruction program has, in turn, helped to support my other business school initiatives. Because I reach all business students face-to-face at least once, I am able to effectively promote both my research consultation services and weekly outreach reference hours at the business school. I can honestly say that the majority of business students know who I am, what I do, and how to seek out my services   and they do!

ke, for example, to secure multiple sessions tied to MGT3325. Instruction for graduate students is still ad hoc in nature and should be formalized. Beyond these immediate goals as a business librarian, I believe my program can serve as a model for the other colleges at the University of Central Missouri, and am encouraging my library colleagues to follow suit. We may not yet enjoy information literacy as a university-
business school!