EMBEDDED LIBRARIANS MEET STUDENTS IN SPACE
ALAO 2009

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Research Realities

& The Good Approach
Land of Plenty—Tech Tools

- Computers
- Internet
- Cell Phones
- MP3 Players
- Search Engines & Full-text Databases
- Websites, Wikis, Blogs, Media
- Electronic Books, Journals, & Newspapers
And Yet, College Students Are:

Anxious, Confused & Frustrated!

Surprising Paradox:

- Research Seems More Difficult in the Digital Age!

- It’s not easy to navigate “a vast and ever-changing information landscape.” (PIL Progress Report 2009)
Research Reduced

- Course-Related Research
  - Typical Assignment: 5 to 7 Page Argument Paper

- Everyday Life Research
  - Health, News, Personal Need, Career, Spirituality
Students Are Frustrated by “Course-Related Research”

60% - Inability to find desired materials

70% - First go to Wikipedia despite the professor’s warning

80% - Procrastinate on more than 80% on their research assignments
Findability is #1 Challenge

Overwhelmed
- Information Overload
- Irrelevant Information
- Getting Started
- Not Knowing What To Look For
- Out-date Books

Lack Orientation to Find
- Books on Library Shelves
- Full-text Articles in a Database
- The “Perfect Source”
- Statistical Information
- Things Not on Web
Undergraduates want:

- Library Instruction Sessions--Optional
  - Nice, but soon forgotten

- I need just-in-time research.

- If I can cope on my own and avoid the library, I will.

- They seem to want a librarian in their learning space.
Undergraduates need:

- Big Picture Skills
- Language
- Situational Context
- Information Gathering
Research Aid in Student Space

Or The Better Approach
If We Build Library Networks, Systems, Websites, OPACS, and Federated Search Tools, Will They Come?
The Mission: To Deliver Library Services to Users

So Where Are These Users?

Put simply, the library portal as we know it today is unsustainable. It, along with a host of other indicators such as declines in reference questions and shifts from print to e-resources, signals that for academic libraries a “let’s just keep doing business as usual” mentality is a sure path to obsolescence.

“The Library Web Site of the Future?” February 17, 2009
Steven J. Bell, associate university librarian, Temple University
He blogs at The Kept-Up Academic Librarian.
Stark Statistics — Confront Realities

- Only 2% of users start at the Library Website rather than with search engines

- 90% of a University Library Collection cannot be found on the free Web
A Radical Solution: Infiltrate or Invade the Course Management System (Partner & Collaborate)

Academic librarians work with students, collections, and technology.

Show up online and make a student smile.
Market the Solution

The Blackboard Embedded Librarian!

Show up in online space students associate with course assignments and provide customized resources and services.
Collaborates with Faculty
Becomes instructor/course builder
Understands course assignments
Provides library links and research strategies for students
Is available via IM, email, phone, F2F
Uses Blackboard Tools
Need @ Miami University Middletown

- Miami University Regional Campus System Expands
- Mandate to Innovate on Regional Campuses
- Online Nursing Program Launched, Fall 2008
- Faltering Economy Motivates Us to Work More Efficiently
- National Trend: Deliver Library Services to Distance Users
Research within Blackboard

- Faculty-Librarian Collaboration
  - Better understand students’ research assignments
  - Customize library content & services!

- Students & Blackboard Embedded Librarian
  - Familiar with Blackboard
  - Associate this online space with course assignments
  - Easy access to research help & links to library resources
Questions Faculty Should Ask

- How will my students complete research assignments when they are enrolled in an online course or meet at a location without a library?

- Would I prefer to collaborate with an information specialist who bridges the worlds of technology, academic collections, and students or go it alone?
Librarian Allays Faculty Fears

- What is a Blackboard embedded librarian?

- Why would I want one turning up in my Blackboard course?

- How long does the relationship last?
Marketing the Program to Prospective Faculty

- E-mail
- Library Blog
- New Faculty Orientation
- Newsletters
- Face to Face
- Word of Mouth
Faculty Agree to Participate

- **Pilot Program, Spring 2009**
  - 10 Faculty of 19 Sections
  - 13 Different Courses, 272 students
  - 3 Embedded Librarians

- **Continuing Program, Fall 2009**
  - 11 Faculty of 19 Sections
  - 11 Different Courses, 265 students
  - 2 Embedded Librarians

- **Online, Off-Campus, Traditional**
- **Lower and Upper Division**
- **Humanities to Science/Technology**
Faculty Needs Surveyed

- When is the embedded librarian needed in the semester? start-up, few weeks, or semester?

- Describe research assignment(s)

- Identify where students have struggled in the past

- Checklist of information literacy skills, Blackboard tools, technologies, and strategies available
Implementing
Model Blackboard Course

- Showcase library wares to faculty
- Demonstrate & explain possibilities
  - relevant electronic resources
  - teaching tutorials of research concepts
- Discuss where embedded content might be added
Implementation

- Collaborating face-to-face with faculty to discuss students’ information needs early in the semester.

- Creating embedded content that meets the needs of the course:
  - LibGuides
  - Tutorials
  - Videos and podcasts
  - Lists of recommended resources specific to assignments
  - Forum and discussion board options

https://mymiami.muohio.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp
Interaction

- Meeting students in class for an information literacy session early in the semester:
  - 15-minute introduction vs. full period of instruction

- Emailing announcements to welcome and alert to updated content
Interaction

- Waiting...
Interaction

- Students eventually seek library help!

- Requests trickle in as assignments come due.

- Students procrastinate on research. (Some things never change.)

- A rare few communicate early and often.
What We’ve Learned and What the Future Holds
Assessing the Embedded Experience

- Two web-based surveys: students and faculty
  - Students (6.25% response rate)
    - 82% visited embedded librarian pages
    - 64% found resources useful and used new ones
    - 70% want embedded librarians in future courses
  - Faculty (44% response rate)
    - 100% thought students used better search methods
    - 75% agreed students better understood options
    - 50% agreed students chose better topics or sources
    - 100% would collaborate in the future
Increased email, IM, and in-person contacts from students during pilot

Study the course schedule to find teachable moments

Location, location, location! Placement of librarian materials is crucial

Combine the strengths of both face-to-face and asynchronous interaction
Lessons Learned (cont’d)

- “Embedded” term has caught on elsewhere on campus

- More interaction = more time (workload issues)
What’s Next?

- Survey faculty and students in embedded classes (late November)
- Analyze results and fine-tune methods
- Create new content for courses & new contact methods
  - More “point of need” F2F instruction sessions
  - Using Elluminate to conduct sessions with small groups or whole classes
  - More Captivate tutorials
- Work more collaboratively with faculty on research assignments – share skills
- Identify faculty and courses for embedding in Spring 2010
Learn More


- Attend 14th Off-Campus Library Services Conference, Cleveland, 2010.
Questions?