Embedded Librarian Survey Results

From the middle of September to the middle of October 2011, we conducted a web-based survey on embedded librarianship in the learning management system (LMS) or virtual learning environment (VLE). The questions used in the survey are available here. Respondents were solicited from 12 electronic discussion lists. We greatly appreciate the time that participants took to complete the survey.

280 librarians responded to the survey. 72% of the respondents are currently embedded with classes in their institutional LMS (8% had been embedded in the past and 6% plan to start an embedded librarian program in the future). 30% of the respondents started their programs three or more years ago (36% started between one and three years ago, and 15% started within the current year).

Embedded librarians are operating in a number of different LMS environments. 56% use Blackboard, followed by 16% in Moodle, 14% in ANGEL (now owned by Blackboard), and 10% in Desire2Learn. The most popular elements of library service that are embedded in the courses are:

- Links to library databases and other information resources (76%)
- Encouragement to contact the embedded librarian for further reference assistance (76%)
- An individual librarian is assigned to one or more participating courses (73%)
- A library tab or link to the library website appears in the LMS for all courses (72%)
- Tutorials, embedded or linked, in the course (69%)
- Information on research concepts (66%)

Respondents reported how many courses on average an individual librarian is embedded in per semester at their institutions. The majority (44%) were embedded in five or fewer courses, while 24% participated in between five and 15 courses. 70% of respondents are embedded in online or web-based courses, and nearly the same percentage (69%) are embedded in traditional, face-to-face courses.

Respondents reported a number of different methods for marketing embedded librarianship. The most common option was "Word of mouth – faculty encouraging other faculty" (70%). Email from librarians (65%) won out over marketing through Facebook (11%) or Twitter (6%).

Assessment of embedded librarian programs is most commonly done through surveys. 48% of respondents used surveys of participating students, and 33% surveyed participating faculty. Solid percentages of respondents also conduct analyses of student research assignments (24%) and conduct information literacy assessments of students (20%). Many respondents commented that they hope to increase and diversify their methods of assessing the impact of embedded librarians.

Respondents offered many favorable comments on the service that they have received from faculty and students and also offered their own perspectives, including the following:
- "Our faculty and students love this service. When asked how he did research, one student said he decided on a topic and then talked with "His Larry" - the embedded librarian."
- "It changed my relationship with the students. I went from being just a librarian to being an instructor. I already had a good relationship with the prof, but this made it better--and we were able to work together in a different way."

- "in the one course I have done this, the students were very enthusiastic about being exposed to research methods. I was shocked! They said they wished that they had been forced to learn how to find maps, articles, and data much earlier in their academic careers."
- "We offer it in place of f2f library instruction so faculty need it to get library support - students often tell us they love having a librarian because it gives them a place and a person to get help with research."

They also identified several challenges that they face in growing embedded librarianship:
- "Librarians don't want to do it because they're already over-worked with too much newly-added responsibilities (chat, "outreach," etc.). Profs are resistant to having librarians meddle in their course pages. Students are ambivalent about the librarians' presence on their course pages."
- "resistance to the idea by director; lack of additional support for the service from other librarians/director; other librarians' attitude that 'this isn't what I was hired to do'"
- "Once librarians 'prove' themselves valuable, the floodgates start crumbling with a number of small requests that can (not always) turn into significant instructional collaboration - with students and their faculty."
- "Spreading the word among faculty and/or convincing them that this can help improve their students' work and research. Some faculty seem reluctant to work with librarians. Defining what research is, at times seems to be another problem. Finally, time -- there's an element of time commitment that can hinder such approach."

Despite these issues, 49% of the respondents believed that the numbers of courses they are embedded in would grow in the coming year, while 37% believed that the number would stay about the same. None thought that their programs would cease.

More details from the survey will be available in the forthcoming book **Embedding Librarianship in Your Campus's LMS: A How-To-Do-It Manual**, by Beth Tumbleson and John Burke (to be published by Neal-Schuman Publishers in the summer of 2012). We hope these results are of interest and advance our collective understanding of how embedded librarianship is being practiced and continues to develop in academic libraries. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have on the survey.

One further note, the authors will be presenting at LOEX this May in Columbus, OH on the question of scalability in embedded librarianship. Please drop in if you are planning to attend the conference.

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