Plugging into the process: Enhancing campus partnerships to provide robust student research support

BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Introduction

The focus of this research evolved from targeting research support for online courses to more broadly understanding research skills of first year students.

Faculty who taught research-based First Year Seminars in the 2013–2014 AY were interviewed in Spring 2014. They were asked to talk about their expectations and perceptions of student research skills.

Methodology

Survey of faculty; Pre- and post-course self-evaluation by students; Interviews of faculty.

Findings/Conclusions

Faculty identified gaps in students' research skills, which are not supported by current services. This research has identified a great opportunity for the Library to rethink its instruction program and collaborate with faculty and others on campus to develop new programs and connect students to the support they need.

Themes	Opportunities
First year students are not well prepared to think critically, communicate, and manage information and time at a university level.	Conduct focus groups with students early in the academic year to identify their perception of their own research skills. Reach out to freshman advisors and work with First Year Seminar faculty. Use the Personal Librarian Program to increase awareness of services and support. *Workshops*: **Advanced Library Research • Media Literacy / Visualization • Government Information • Data Literacy**
Students need support in understanding the craft of research. While some of this instruction must come from faculty, additional support is needed.	Develop workshops that help students define their research topics, develop a research strategy, and successfully engage in the scholarly research process. *Workshops*: **Reading Scholarly Materials • Literature Reviews: How to Read and Write Them** **Data Series (including topics such as data literacy, cleaning data, file management, visualization)**
Understanding the philosophical and practical issues associated with citing works, citation management, and plagiarism are skills students need but do not generally have.	Enhance our citation workshop series to include not only citation management tools, but plagiarism and basic citations as well. *Workshops*: **Citations: What, When, Why and How • Copyright Basics**
There is a need to improve student engagement in the research process in classrooms as well as in independent work.	Extend collaboration with the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning regarding library instructional delivery, and about how to increase student engagement in the research process.
While the Writing Center focuses on instruction on grammar and syntax, there is no equivalent service for research skills and writing skills for research papers.	Explore ideas for programmatic and disciplinary research support, including training graduate students as research fellows with guidance from across campus.

University Library: Sarah Evelyn Bordac, *Head, Instructional Design* • Daniel P. O'Mahony, *Director, Library Assessment and Planning* • Edwin Quist, *Associate University Librarian, Research and Outreach Services*

Partners: Ann Gaylin, *Associate Dean of the College for First Year and Sophomores* • Kathy Takayama, *Director, Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning*

"More students are less prepared than they used to be. Students don't understand how research works. Brown has a problem in that we continue to pretend that the students are more prepared than they need to be."

— Senior Lecturer, Education

"Librarians provide a valuable service with group instruction and class presentations [BI]. Students absorb at least some of it, but what they do absorb is that they remember the librarian, and those who take the assignment seriously come to see you. I see that the real value [of the BI] is that it is a first stepping stone."

— Professor of American History

"I wonder if the LibGuides can be a collaboration with the writing fellows. The goals for my course are to introduce new content to the students, to improve their reading and encourage the development of strong research skills. The partnership of the librarian and writing fellow would help achieve those goals."

— Assistant Dean of Medicine (Advising)

"Students need to be exposed to formal research skills training. I was absolutely shocked that I had to teach honors students what I thought they should already have known. They don't know how to evaluate resources — what is valued, legit, why one resource over another, they don't know how or why to reference sources, how to read a literature review."

— Senior Lecturer, International Studies

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