Teacher Librarian Interviews

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Synthesis

Based on the Elluminate discussion on 3/2/2010, the following are factors that I believe play a role in whether or not teacher librarians are able to interact with faculty at Stage 3 to help design educational activities.

Situational factors include a supportive administration that is open to the idea of librarians as equal partners in educating students. Money is also a factor. A school that lacks the funding to provide resources to their students above the basic necessities, such as textbooks and basic supplies, will certainly not be to afford the resources that are required, such as computers and related networking infrastructure, and training the faculty and librarians in collaboration. Teacher librarians must also have adequate time in their daily schedules to allow them to collaborate with faculty on curriculum design on a regular basis. Librarians who have adequate time tend to be those who have some sort of assistance with their work, either from clerks or paraprofessionals, such as library assistants.

External factors that are detrimental to a librarian’s being able to undertake Stage 3 interaction mainly are those of perception. Often a library does not have a clearly defined role within the educational institution, or the administration lacks awareness as to the role a library could potentially play. The perception of what a library does is limited to that of being “the place where books are kept”. In many cases, educators do not see librarians as being their equals when it comes to educating students.

It is ultimately internal factors that influence whether or not a librarian will engage with faculty at Stage 3. These internal factors are personality, enthusiasm and the librarian’s attitude and philosophy regarding their current or possible role. It takes energy
and enthusiasm as well as an awareness of a library’s potential to enable the librarian to advocate for their roles as educators within school systems. It is up to the librarian to do so, as they know best what services librarians are able to provide. In a sense, they need to educate the educators and help them see the ways that libraries can be partners in educating students.

Interview 1 – Academic Library

Date of Interview - 2/19/2010

Librarian M works in an academic medical library and is liaison to the school of nursing at the institution that the library serves.

M Works with faculty who teach theory classes for first year nursing students (N1). She starts by reading the syllabi to understand content for each class and then decides the topic and designs an integrative literature search for each class based on the curriculum provided by each teacher. She reviews the lit search she has developed with the faculty before teaching class so that it can be revised as needed.

M also works on instruction for second year nursing students (N2) who are required to write a thesis. As the N2s focus on evidence-based nursing practice, this therefore becomes the focus for their lit search class.

M helps N2s prepare for comprehensive nursing exam by providing one-on-one consultation. She helps the students create the topic for the exam and guides them in creating a topic for which there is neither too much nor too little information available. In addition, she teaches RefWorks to master’s students as a way of helping them prepare for exams.
M’s instructional interaction extends beyond curriculum development. She consults with faculty on an annual basis regarding renewal of databases and journal titles. She also teaches basic search skills focusing on evidence-based nursing practice at a yearly nursing symposium. In addition, she developed a series of classes for the nursing faculty in collaboration with the Dean of Nursing Research.

While she did not say specifically where she falls on the continuum, based on my understanding of the three stages I would say that M is at Stage 3 in her level of interaction with the faculty, in that she takes an active role in consulting with them about what resources they find necessary for teaching purposes, and makes sure that they receive library instruction as well. In addition, by providing one-on-one consulting with each nursing student, she helps each student devise his or her own personalized learning path.

Interview 2 – College Library

Date of Interview - 2/23/10

 Librarian B’s title is Coordinator of Library Instructional Services and Information Competency. She states that she has a “comprehensive role” in curriculum design in that she sits on the curriculum committee, which allows her to see all new courses and programs as they are developed. This provides her to with an opportunity to advocate for the library by being able to ask how students will prepare for the course or program in question.

As an advocate for the library, B makes faculty aware of resources and services that the library provides, such as Moodle, online services, chat, and support for online classes. One problem she encounters is that students and teachers don’t always know
what to expect from the library. One of her roles therefore is to make faculty aware of the scholarly online resources that are available, and that online searching is not just Google.

B notes that newer faculty members are more open to working with the library to structure the contents of their courses, especially in areas involving research, such as nursing and health sciences. When the librarian gets a course outline, he or she is able to determine where library resources will best fit into the curriculum.

A problem she has encountered is that the faculty doesn’t always contact the library first to make sure a resource exists before assigning it to their students. This has resulted in a student coming to library with resource that has been assigned and not being able to find it. The librarian then has to work backward to ask the faculty about where they found the resource they assigned. He or she then has to go to interlibrary loan to get copies made so that they can be put on reserve. B notes that in this situation, she only got involved when another librarian contacted her.

A solution that B came up with is a project where the librarian works with a course instructor to determine how to fit the library into the course ahead of time.

Currently, however, she states that the type of instruction she provides is more course-related than course-integrated.

As in Interview 1, the library has liaisons to various faculty and departments. B is liaison to the departments of Child Development and Family Studies, Psychology and Sociology.
One of B’s achievements is that she helped implement information competency as a requirement for graduation. Students must take 5 hours of research skills via a workshop taken through the English Department.

B did not state in the phone interview where she falls on the continuum. However, she did provide the following comments in a SurveyMonkey survey I had developed based on the requirements of the assignment and the Stages described therein*:

Stage 1:
- We go beyond this to be proactive in suggesting to instructors ways to revise assignments to make better use of library and online resources.
- We also suggest the need for training workshops for students and offer training to instructors on a variety of online resources.

Stage 2:
- As explained in Stage 2 [1], we try to be proactive and currently are discussing offering the embedded librarian concept to faculty teaching online and/or hybrid courses.

Stage 3:
- Yes and NO. This more complete instructional design team idea occurs only with a few instructors and librarians. We aspire to this model, but we're not there yet across the curriculum.

Based on her comments in the survey, her statements in the interview and my understanding of the stages, I would say that her level of interaction falls in Stage 2.

Further evidence is based provided by the fact that while she is on the curriculum
committee for the college, she still is in a position where she needs to advocate for the library as an instructional resource for faculty and students alike.

*This librarian communicated to me via email that she completed the SurveyMonkey survey, whereas the other two librarians interviewed told me that they would not complete it and would rather speak to me on the phone. This is how I am able to isolate these comments as belonging to this particular librarian.

Interview 3 – College Library

Date of Interview - 2/23/2010

Librarian S is Electronic Resources and Reference Librarian at the college library for which she works.

S describes her role as providing integrated instruction, or instruction that is integrated into a class syllabus. A faculty member will request instruction for his or her class, or states that he or she wants to bring the class in for a library session. The faculty member asks S to teach the class how to do lit searches and to help students find and evaluate resources. The library session is usually on the class syllabus from the beginning of the semester, though it sometimes happens that it is not included on the syllabus and the request comes while the class is underway.

S also works with faculty by giving input for the development of assignments and assessment tools. In one project S worked with a faculty member who was teaching a green media course. She helped the students in the class design an exhibit related to food and cooking with the library playing the role of the client, and that in this role, she worked with the students on creating the exhibit for the library.
S also works on the Forward program, which is a 2-week program that takes place before the start of the fall semester. This program is for students who may need extra help meeting learning requirements. S and other librarians will teach library skills, while other faculty members will teach math and writing skills.

As in the cases of the two other college librarians, this library has a liaison assigned to every program and major. S is the liaison to the Sociology Department and is backup liaison to the Schools of Nursing, Business and Asia-Pacific Studies.

S indicated to me verbally that she is at Stage 2, as the bulk of the instruction she provides takes place during the course of writing classes. Furthermore, she states that while the library is integrated into the coursework at the college, she is not involved in instructional design, per se.

Interview Notes
The following are the notes I took during my interviews. I have kept the librarians’ names and their institutions anonymous.

Interview 1 – 2/19/10

M – Academic Library
Library liaison with School of Nursing

Background:
Average age of nursing students older than in medical school as many nursing students turn to nursing after having other work experience.

Interdisciplinary
Run more than just PubMed database

Description of Interaction:
• Works with faculty who teach theory class for 1st year nursing students (N1)
  o Reads syllabus to understand content for each class.
  o Decides the topic and designs integrative literature search for each class based on curriculum provided by each teacher.
  o Reviews lit search with faculty before teaching class to revise as needed.
  o 2nd year nursing students (N2) write thesis.
• N2s focus on evidence-based nursing practice, so this becomes the focus for the lit search class.
  o Helps N2s prepare for comprehensive nursing exam.
  o Provides one-on-one consultation.
  o Students create topic for exam.
  o Guides students with creating topic for which there is neither too much nor too little information available.
  o Teaches RefWorks to masters students.
    ▪ Also a way of helping them prepare for exams.
• Lots of interaction with faculty.
  o Consults with faculty yearly regarding renewal of databases and journal titles.
• Teaches basic search focusing on evidence-based nursing practice at yearly UCSF-Stanford Nursing Symposium.
• Developed a series of classes for the nursing faculty in collaboration with the Dean of Nursing Research.

Interview 2 – 2/23/10

B – College Library
Title: Coordinator of Library Instructional Services and Information Competency

Description of Interaction:

- Has a “comprehensive role” in curriculum design
- Sits on curriculum committee
- Sees new courses and programs
  - Opportunity to interject – “how will students prepare for this course?”
- Advocate for library
  - Makes faculty aware of resources and services
    - Example: use of Moodle, online services, chat, support for online classes
- Library has own online class
  - Students and teachers don’t always know what to expect from the library
  - Makes faculty aware of scholarly online resources (as opposed to Google).
- Newer faculty open to working with library to structure content of course, especially in areas involving research, such as nursing and health sciences.
- Librarian gets course outline, determines where library resources fit best into curriculum.
- Problem: faculty doesn’t always contact library first to make sure resources exist before assigning resources to students.
  - Results in student coming to library with resource requirement. Librarian works backward to ask faculty about resource:
    - Where did they find resource to assign?
  - Librarian then has to go to ILL to get copies made for reserve
    - Note: only got involved when another librarian contacted her.
• Solution: project where librarian works with course instructor to determine how to fit library into course.

• Library has liaisons to faculty

• B G-L is liaison to Child Development and Family Studies, Psychology and Sociology

• More course-related instruction than course-integrated

• Helped implement information competency requirement for graduation
  
  o 5 hours of research skills workshop taken in English Department.

Interview 3 – 2/23/10

S – College Library

Title: Electronic Resources and Reference Librarian

Description of Interaction:

• Integrated instruction

• Faculty requests instruction
  
  o Has a class that he wants to bring in for a library session
  
  o Asks librarian to teach lit search
  
  o Help students find and evaluate resources
  
  o On syllabus from beginning of semester
  
  o Majority not instructional design

• Worked with faculty:
  
  o Gave input for assignment and assessment test.

• Working with faculty on green media course
  
  o Helping students design exhibit with library in role of client
• Exhibit related to food, cooking, etc, tied in with coursework and media.

• Forward program:
  o 2 week program before school start
  o For students who may need extra help meeting requirements
  o Librarians teach library skills
  o Other faculty teach math and writing skills

• Library liaison assigned to every program and major
  o SK is liaison to Sociology Dept and backup liaison to Schools of Nursing, Business and Asia Pacific Studies

• Bulk of instruction is writing classes.