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Making an IMPACT

Campus-wide collaboration for course and learning space transformation

Most of us would agree that the roles of librarians have been changing with an almost mind-reeling rapidity. While this can be challenging, it also can provide excellent opportunities to support our students in their academic endeavors in new and meaningful ways.

At Purdue University such an opportunity arrived in the shape of a provost-initiated, campus-wide course redesign program called Instruction Matters: Purdue Academic Course Transformation (IMPACT). This initiative aims to bring active-learning to foundational courses traditionally taught through lectures. Involved since the onset, Purdue librarians recognized the IMPACT initiative as one way to enter the conversations blooming on our campus about the nature of learning, curriculum design, and how space design impacts potential learning.

Needless to say, involvement in this initiative has required us to examine our professional roles and to rethink them in light of how our work could better support student-centered learning.

In this article, we will present three perspectives: 1) the information literacy coordinator, 2) a libraries' administrator with a gift for space planning, and 3) an in-the-trenches liaison to course redesign projects. Each will discuss the IMPACT initiative from his or her unique perspective and view of its impact on librarian roles. Collectively, we will tell why we think it is essential that this kind of campus effort is supported by libraries.

Information literacy coordinator

Contextualized approaches to teaching information literacy link information skills and practices to meaning-making activities.[1] Put plainly by one of the professors in the IMPACT program, we need to create relevancy for our students, which we can only do by teaching them information skills while they learn about the course topic. We want to move away from the increasingly criticized approaches to teaching information literacy as a discrete set of generic skills.[2]

The IMPACT course redesign initiative is an excellent opportunity for the Purdue Libraries, because it places librarians in the right place at the right time to discuss with teachers how to get their students to learn to use information while learning about a subject holistically.

Steven Bell and John Shank claim that "one area in which academic librarians lag is in our understanding of pedagogy and adoption of instructional design theory and practice."[3] The librarians selected to work with IMPACT were aware that they were being called on to provide pedagogic guidance that went beyond the boundaries of information literacy. Even though we knew that we could consult with our colleagues at the Purdue Center for Instructional Excellence (CIE), we still felt we needed to prepare ourselves for this new kind of support.

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Before joining an IMPACT team, the librarians met regularly to discuss pedagogy and review course redesign models endorsed by the National Center for Academic Transformation.[4] In hindsight, I would say that we were very prepared—that our skills, developed through programs such as those provided by ACRL's Immersion Program, ACRL's Instruction Section, the Library Information Technology Association (LITA), and opportunities on our own campus through CIE, as well as our own practice as teachers, had readied us to guide other faculty.

Since joining the group this year, IMPACT librarians have worked with each of the 28 teachers redesigning courses. Partnering with staff from CIE and Information Technology at Purdue (ITaP), IMPACT librarians help these professors to define outcomes, consider pedagogic approaches, and develop assessment techniques.

While not all of these redesigns have focused heavily on information literacy, some professors have made tremendous strides in this regard. Perhaps then the real question becomes are we meeting enough of our goals to justify our involvement? Obviously IMPACT gives us the opportunity to work with faculty to create meaningful information literacy experiences for our students. But the librarians are learning equally as much from the subject faculty about the pedagogic and curricular concerns related to information literacy being discussed in departments and disciplines. By placing our focus on *learning,* rather than only *information literacy,* we have been able to bring our expertise to the fore to help our institution make advances to improve teaching and learning in ways that include information literacy.

Libraries administrator and space planning

Library administrators must serve as a link between the library and other campus administrators and faculty and engage in the planning, implementation, and management of academic learning spaces on their campus. There is no one successful "library space or place" design that is correct. Instead, it must be in alignment with the needs of your particular institution's goals and structure. For effective space planning, library professionals must understand the variety of ways that students learn, be able to design an effective information literacy program to support curriculum needs, and deliver assessment outcomes for the services and facilities they create. Purdue Libraries' highly successful strategy of creating academic learning spaces in our libraries and working with discipline faculty to incorporate information literacy into their course redesign led to the opportunity to participate as a key member in the IMPACT initiative, which began in 2011.

It wasn't until the instructional classroom, called the LearnLab, part of the renovation of the Purdue Management and Economics Library (MEL), was completed that faculty, students, and administrators began to understand the reality of the changing paradigm of librarians as teachers in a state-of-the-art learning space. Campus-wide awareness of the successful MEL renovation and the LearnLab resulted in me, head librarian of MEL, being asked by the associate provost of academic affairs to become a member of the IMPACT Steering Committee.

The goal of IMPACT is to engage today's student in a more active learning environment to enhance student success with information delivery. I established relationships with the IMPACT faculty, soliciting their input for the design and technologies needed for an active learning classroom. This input was used to create an IMPACT classroom with 117 seats in the Hicks Undergraduate Library in summer 2011; in turn, recognition of the success of this classroom has led to the libraries receiving additional funds from the provost's office for two more IMPACT classrooms created in Hicks completed in fall 2012.

This increased support for IMPACT classrooms in the libraries demonstrates the value of an administrator's collaboration with campus entities external to the libraries and the

growing recognition of the need to deliver instruction to large foundational courses within in a high-tech collaborative space.

Faculty support for libraries seems to be related to the degree the library is aware of its external environment. That environment includes the other units of the university as well as communities and the field of higher education beyond the institution. Library administrators have the responsibility to work proactively to respond to the changing needs and demands of our campuses. When newly created library spaces successfully reflect what is needed, these libraries will add value and see a return on their investment. Making the connection between learning spaces and information literacy has been an extremely successful strategy for Purdue Libraries.

"In-the-trenches" liaison to redesign projects

Bell and Shank's article advocated for the role of "blended librarians," a concept "largely built on creating a movement that will encourage and enable academic librarians to evolve into a new role in which the skills and knowledge of instructional design are wedded to our existing library and information technology skills."[5] The blended librarian should engage in campus leadership as innovators and change agents, commit to campus-wide information literacy initiatives, design instructional programs about information literacy and library services, collaborate and engage in dialogue with individuals who possess expertise in instructional design and technology, and concentrate efforts towards hybrid/blended courses.[6]

Barbara Dewey provided examples of "embedded librarians" in a variety of campus contexts, urging librarians to collaborate with an array of partners to advance college and university-wide strategic priorities. Librarians are uniquely suited, she argued, because of our broad perspective and neutral point of view.[7] Librarians serving on IMPACT support teams integrate characteristics of both "blended" and "embedded" librarians.

The 28 courses that comprise IMPACT's Second Cohort are from various disciplines, including History, Statistics, Nursing, and Mechanical Engineering Technology. The faculty member for each course is assigned a support team, which includes one primary and at least one secondary team member, depending on particular needs. The primary support team member serves as the fellows' "go-to person" for the project. Each support team includes members from at least two, possibly three, areas of support: the libraries, CIE, and ITAP. Support team members serve as a sounding board for fellows as they work through their redesigns. We provide resources, consultation, gentle reminders regarding instructional best practices, and aid in keeping the project on task by paying attention to project deadlines and setting up meetings (usually, biweekly).

Support team members alternately lead and attend, along with IMPACT fellows, weekly Faculty Learning Community (FLC) sessions that cover content related to instructional design and provide time for sharing and discussion. Support teams meet regularly to review FLC content, discuss its relationship to the particular course, and address questions and concerns. Team members consult on issues and topics related to their particular expertise—information literacy (libraries) and instructional technology (ITaP), for example. For the teams, it has proven invaluable to be able to provide varied yet complementary areas of expertise.

In particular, librarians on support teams offer fellows partnership and advising on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) projects; guidance in the use of unique learning spaces; consultation on developing learning modules/assignments/assessments, especially related to information literacy; guest lectures or "embedded librarian" services; the development of course-related information resource guides (LibGuides); consultation with individual or groups of students; assistance embedding information resources within learning technologies (e.g., Blackboard); connecting IMPACT fellows with other experts in the libraries (subject specialists, data specialists, archivists, for example); and promoting awareness of information resources. Depending on the needs of the fellow and the particular goals

of the course, librarians serving on support teams may offer much or very little in terms of information literacy-related consultation. Because of our expertise, we are able to recognize opportunities and provide suggestions and ideas when they arise.

For example: "What you're talking about sounds like information literacy. Have you considered creating a learning outcome or objective related to this?" or "Since critical thinking is such a priority for you, have you considered developing an assignment or activity related to critical evaluation of different types of information resources relevant to the subject?" Since information literacy is so wide-reaching and is most effectively conveyed when integrated and contextual, opportunities present themselves in all of these disciplines more often than one might assume.

Conclusion

Being involved in IMPACT has brought the libraries to the forefront of campus conversations about the changing nature of undergraduate education. The first cohort of libraries-supported IMPACT courses were taught in fall 2012, and librarians continue to support the redesign new courses through IMPACT. Two new active learning spaces opened in the libraries in fall 2012, and plans for others are underway. Purdue librarians expect other opportunities and new roles to emerge from their efforts in this collaborative, campus-wide initiative.

Notes

1. Christine Susan Bruce, *Informed Learning* (Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2008).

2. Sheila Webber and Bill Johnston, "Conceptions of Information Literacy: New Perspectives and Implications," *Journal of Information Science* 26, no. 6 (2000): 384.

3. Steven Bell and John Shank, "The Blended Librarian: A Blueprint for Redefining the Teaching and Learning role of Academic Libraries," *C&RL News* 65, no. 7: 373.

4. National Center for Academic Transformation, "Six Models for Course Redesign," www.thencat.org/PlanRes/R2R_ModCrsRed.htm

5. Bell and Shank, "The Blended Librarian," 373.

6. Ibid., 374.

7. Barbara I. Dewey, "The Embedded Librarian," *Resource Sharing & Information Networks* 17: nos. 1-2 (2004): 10. 𝒵

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