Embedded Library Instruction in Undergraduate Research Classes: Facilitating Scholarly Conversation between Librarians, Faculty and Students

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Introduction
The George Mason University Libraries, working with the University’s Students as Scholars program and the Office of Institutional Assessment, used our participation in the AIA Assessment in Action program to study the impact of systematically embedding librarians into research-intensive and scholarly inquiry classes during the 2013/2014 academic year (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010). The purpose was to evaluate the impact on student learning that could occur from weaving librarian participation into course development, assignment creation and pre- and post-evaluation of student work. Librarians were partnered with faculty members in a variety of subject areas to test this approach.

Mason developed the Students as Scholars Quality Enhancement Plan in 2009 (Usher et al 2011), as a part of our decennial re-accreditation, with a goal of increasing student success in research and active learning environments. To make these opportunities available to all students, faculty have been encouraged to create research-based courses that build disciplinary skills and provide authentic projects for students. The resulting assessment-conducted with support from the Office of Institutional Assessment—is increasingly important to understanding the impact of Mason’s educational efforts.

Process
Before semester
• AIA/SaS team evaluate research course offerings, invite faculty and librarians to participate
• Faculty and librarians meet to design assignments and plan librarian interaction during semester.

During semester
• Librarians visit classes for introduction, administer survey.
• Faculty and librarians use survey to target information literacy instruction.
• Librarians respond to wiki prompts
• Librarians provide planned interaction with students.
• Students complete projects, contacting librarians as needed.
• Students complete end of semester survey.
• Faculty give librarians access to student work products.
• Librarians evaluate student work using rubric.

End of semester
• AIA/SaS teams receive email feedback from faculty and librarians.
• Faculty and librarians plan future collaboration.

Who participated?

What did students learn?

How might the project be improved?

Overall, the partnerships in which faculty and librarians worked together in a collaborative and sustained way produced the best results for students, faculty, and librarians. The project has demonstrated success for this first year, and with continued support and growth in partnership with OSCAR, the long-term impact seems sustainable. Much of this model will be helpful in the future to create better collaborations between faculty and librarians in teaching. We will continue the following:
• Pairing librarians with faculty teaching OSCAR research courses.
• Using the initial survey to assess the information literacy skills of the students within the context of the assignments. Encouraging collaboration between faculty and librarians on assignments.
• Librarians having access to, and assessing, student final products.

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References
• Usher B, K, Eby, and QEP Planning Committee. 2011. Quality Enhancement Plan: Students as Scholars, Fostering a Culture of Student Scholarship. Presented to Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, in partial fulfillment of requirements for Reaffirmation of Reaccreditation at Edgar Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia. (oscar.gmu.edu)