Leaving The Library: How We Improved Information Literacy By Joining Our User Communities

Presenters:
- Nadine Anderson, Behavioral Sciences and Women's & Gender Studies Librarian, University of Michigan-Dearborn
- Joel Scheuher, Business Librarian, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan

Description: By moving into the spaces where students and faculty work and learn, librarians broaden our understanding of the culture, goals, and needs of our user communities. This approach has enabled us to partner with program faculty and stakeholders to develop high-impact, customized information literacy initiatives aligned with program goals.

Abstract

How can we develop a better understanding of the goals of our user communities and what they're trying to accomplish? What can we do to ensure that our information literacy goals and initiatives align with what our students need to learn? How do we demonstrate our value and expertise to our user communities?

One strategy is to disrupt where we practice librarianship. By practicing librarianship solely in the library, our practice is shaped mainly by the library. Moving out of the library and inhabiting the space where our students and faculty work gives librarians opportunities to engage with and develop strong working relationships with our program faculty and stakeholders. We can then use these strong working relationships to better learn about the culture, goals, and needs of our user communities and align our information literacy goals and initiatives with them. By focusing our information literacy initiatives to what will have the biggest impacts on our user communities, and through partnerships with faculty and campus stakeholders, we become seen as a valuable partner in problem-solving and meeting their goals. Our practice of librarianship becomes informed by and integrated into our user communities.

This presentation describes the process of getting librarians out of the library and engaged with their user communities at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and the University of Michigan, Ross School of Business. We also discuss strategies that librarians used to build relationships with faculty and other stakeholders in their program areas as well as those used to learn about the program's culture, goals, and needs. Librarians were able to leverage this into integrated information literacy initiatives tailored to these goals and needs and developed in collaboration with partners in their user communities, which had a greater impact on desired student outcomes. This increased the perceived importance of information literacy learning and awareness of librarian expertise among program faculty and stakeholders, who also found it easier to collaborate with their librarians. It also became easier and more motivating for students to consult their librarian and use library resources. By moving into the spaces where our students and faculty work and learn, we were able to develop high-impact information literacy goals and initiatives aligned with those of our user communities and demonstrate our value.

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**Nadine Anderson
Behavioral Sciences and Women's &
Gender Studies Librarian
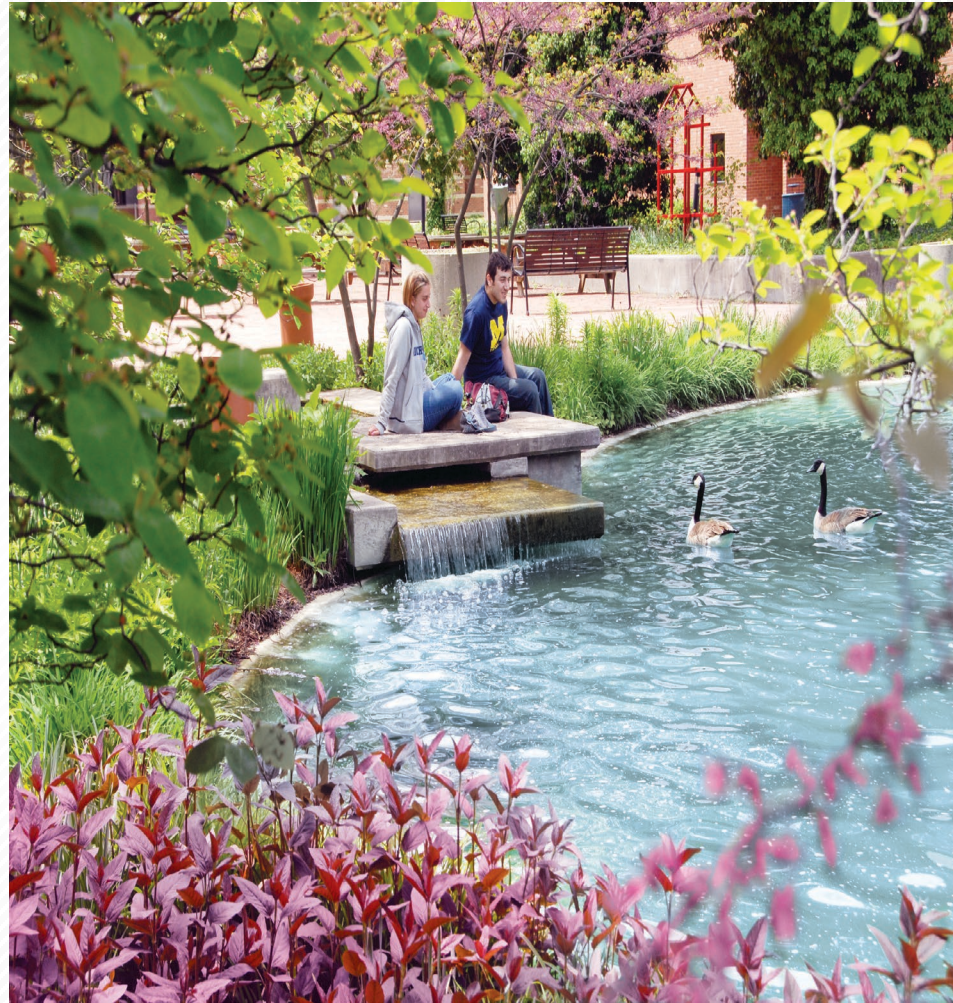University of Michigan-Dearborn
nfanders@umich.edu**

@NadineFAnderson

**Joel Scheuher
Business Librarian
University of Michigan
Ross School of Business
jscheuhe@umich.edu**

DEARBORN
MARDIGIAN LIBRARY

MICHIGAN ROSS

University of Michigan-Dearborn

Why Leave?

- Liaison librarians in library offices
- Reactive: respond to IL requests
- Standardized one-shot sessions
- Service provider
- Reference questions down
- Library building = study space
- Becoming irrelevant to program and campus student learning goals

The Solution?

Join our user communities

Models:
- **David Shumaker**: *The Embedded Librarian: Innovative Strategies for Taking Knowledge Where It's Needed*
- **R. David Lankes**: *The New Librarianship Field Guide; Atlas of New Librarianship*

Why Join User Communities?

"When people have an information need they'll always ask people they know before they ask a librarian. The trick is making sure that librarians are some of the people they know." – Jessamyn West (pg. 83, Atlas of New Librarianship)

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Joining User Communities: Process

- Office *among faculty offices*
- 60% user community/40% library split
- Posted office hours
- On program email lists
- Marketing

Joining User Communities: Strategies

- Be proactive
- Entrepreneurial mindset
- Informal needs assessment
- Troubleshooting mode
- Embrace serendipitous opportunities for partnership

Information Literacy Partnerships

Customized, Value-Added Collaborative Partnerships:

- Strategically placed in courses throughout the curriculum
- Embedded in courses and course management sites
- Develop and teach program-specific IL credit course
- Online IL tutorial development
- Course and assignment redesign projects to incorporate IL
- Honors and Graduate program research consultant

Information Literacy Outcomes

- Significantly higher number of student and faculty interactions
- LibGuide use significantly higher
- Students score significantly higher on evaluating sources compared to students in one-shots
- Pre-tests and post-tests indicate significant student research skill development
- Faculty feedback overwhelmingly positive

Kresge Library & Ross School Background

- 100% digital library
- 7.5 reference librarians + 1 director

Kresge Library & Ross School Background

- 4,068 students (Fall 2018)
- Programs
  - Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)
  - Master of Business Administration (MBA)
  - Master of Supply Chain Management (MSCM)
  - Master of Management (MM)
  - Master of Accounting (MAcc)
  - PhD

Action-Based Learning

Ross Experiences in Action-Based Learning: REAL

Learning Business by Doing Business.

Action-Based Learning

- Learning by doing
  - Students are put in real-world situations, guided by faculty, with real stakes
- No case study with guidance questions
  - Teams work with real deadlines and uncertainty
  - Teams present a solution to the organization that is sponsoring the project

Multidisciplinary Action Projects (MAP)

Multidisciplinary Action Projects (MAP)

- Teams of students analyze business problems or opportunities and make recommendations for improvements
  - Students (4-6 per team)
  - Sponsor (companies, nonprofits, NGOs, government organizations)
  - Faculty advisor
  - Travel advisor
  - Communication advisor
  - Research expert (librarian)

Action-Based Learning (ABL) Programs

MAP Programs	Other ABL Examples

• MBA MAP
   • Full-time (85 projects)
   • Part-time
      • Evening (10 projects)
      • Weekend (25 projects)
      • Online (TBD)
   • Global (10 projects)
   • Executive (25 projects)
      • Ann Arbor, MI (16)
      • Los Angeles, CA (9)
• Capstone MAP: BBA and Master of Mgmt. (40 projects)
	• Classes
	   • ES 395 Entrepreneurial Management
	   • TO 300 Business Information Systems
	   • Strat 492 Dynamic Capabilities Through Corporate Development
	• Real Experiences in ABL (REAL)
	   • Michigan Business Challenge
	   • Maize and Blue Fund
	   • Erb Impact Projects
	   • Zell Entrepreneurs
	   • Sanger Leadership Crisis Challenge
	   • Clubs, competitions, etc.

Los Angeles MAP

LA MAP – Background

- Part of the Executive MBA Program
- Launched in 2012
- Students are usually working full-time in various industries

LA MAP - Overview

- Usually 8-10 student teams
- Students, professors, and librarians convene 3 times during the fall semester

LA MAP – Librarian Role

- 1ST visit (late Oct. or early Nov.)
  - Formal one hour presentation on the afternoon of the first day
    - Showcase library databases
    - Customize examples to the sponsors' proposals
  - Visits to each team in their breakout rooms
    - Each librarian has 4-5 teams
    - Sit in on the sponsor presentation/meeting
    - Gather preliminary requests based on team meetings with the sponsor
  - Dinner with entire cohort

LA MAP – Librarian Role

- 2ND visit (late Nov.)
  - Continue to visit teams in their breakout rooms
    - Some teams may be traveling to sponsor locations
    - Address new requests based on shifting team priorities
- 3RD visit (mid Dec.)
  - Attend the final presentations
  - Wrap up dinner with faculty and support staff
- Between visits
  - Respond to the flood of information requests via email

LA MAP – Engaging Place & Practice

- We live, eat, and mingle with the students
  - Research is customized for the LA user community
- We get to meet the sponsors and hear their presentations
  - Better understanding of the project scope

LA MAP – Outcomes

- Information literacy outcomes
  - Students have a much better understanding of resources and library services
  - Students come back for library help in subsequent classes
    - "I wish I had known about the library earlier in the program."
  - Students learn of other services, i.e. career and job search assistance

LA MAP – Outcomes

- **More information requests per team**
  - 8.0 per AA team, 11.4 per LA team
- **Library recognition**
  - Teams acknowledge librarian contributions during final presentations
  - Sponsors and the faculty advisors learn about our contributions
  - Faculty become advocates of the library
    - Our research expertise is marketed as a competitive advantage to our MBA program
    - Faculty highly encourage the use of our services
  - Faculty can justify the travel cost to administration

LA MAP – Takeaways

- One-shot presentations followed by one-on-one meetings lead to much higher usage
- Living with the user community is a great way to understand their needs
  - Librarians are available and approachable
  - Feedback is immediate and in-person
  - Questions are more thoughtful and impactful
- Since the library is 100% online, it frees up the librarians to venture into the user community
- Having a physical human presence is important in a virtual world
  - It's all about relationship building

Benefits

- IL initiatives aligned with program goals and needs
- Develop strong working relationships
- Facilitates learning about culture, needs, and goals
- Grassroots IL initiatives have buy in and high impact
- Valuable partner in problem-solving and meeting goals
- Easily accessible to students and faculty
- Success snowballs

Challenges

- Success snowballs out of control
- Balancing program and library
- Out of some librarian comfort zones and skill sets

Solutions

- Stay strategic!
- Set clear boundaries
- Provide support, training, and resources

Questions?

Nadine Anderson
Behavioral Sciences and Women's &
Gender Studies Librarian
University of Michigan-Dearborn
nfanders@umich.edu
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Ross School of Business
jscheuhe@umich.edu

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