

Faculty In-service: How to Boost Academic Library Services

Debra Lucas (lucasd@dyc.edu)

Head of Reference, Library, D'Youville College, Buffalo, NY

Abstract

This article discusses a collaborative approach to educate college faculty about the library to encourage faculty to engage and participate in services such as library instruction, interlibrary loan, course reserves, and research desk assistance. The more faculty know about the library, the more that they use them. Well informed faculty create students who will also be interested in the library. In-servicing is recommended because it allows librarians to market the library. Creating a well-planned library in-service also creates an opportunity to highlight a librarian's teaching and research skills.

Keywords: Marketing; in-service; faculty

Introduction

Faculty can best understand the professional functions that academic librarians serve if the faculty receive in-servicing sessions. In-servicing is the act of collaboratively introducing new and existing faculty to the library resources and services. This method is recommended because it allows librarians to market the library and the services it provides. Creating a well-planned library in-service also creates an opportunity to highlight a librarian's teaching and research skills.

The main goal of an academic in-service is to create independent library researchers and critical thinkers who can recognize and analyze valuable scholarly resources. The secondary goal is to market general library services. Academic libraries exist to support faculty and students who are conducting research and writing academic and scholarly papers. Since we offer instructional and research skill development services to the students, why not also offer that to the teaching faculty?

Faculty in-service not only provides information on library services, but it also gives librarians the chance to showcase their professional abilities and research experience. Librarians not only work with students who are conducting research at the library research desk; they also routinely provide student-based instruction in

small classroom settings and large university halls.

In many academic institutions, librarians are classified as faculty and sometimes work in tenure-track lines. As such, they also conduct their own research that is subsequently used in publishing scholarly and peer reviewed journal articles. When library in-services are implemented effectively, it shows a librarian's skill and comfort with conducting an endless array of academic research for both students and faculty.

Additionally, faculty in-service can be conducted so that the peer-to-peer experience becomes a teaching moment. In promoting library research assistance, librarians can also market such services as:

- Student-based library instruction group sessions
- Library subscription-based online databases
- Free web-based internet sites, such as PubMed and Google Scholar
- Interlibrary loan
- Collection development
- Reserves
- Items of special research interests, such as archives or discipline specific databases.

Literature Review

According to Terri Pedersen Sumney, a marketing plan is "a roadmap or guide to the whole



marketing process." It describes where the organization is at, where it plans to go and how it will get there.¹ Through faculty designed instructional programs, faculty can learn more about the resources and services the library provides. Giving them the opportunity to learn is critical. "Unless coaxed by the library, these groups may not effectively use the full range of services that the library offers to them."² Campbell and Gibson say that students and faculty don't know what makes library resources different from free web based Internet resources³.

Marketing library services via faculty inservicing resembles a faculty liaison program in its planning stages, its results and the overall intentions. Zheng Ye (Lan) Yang said that "It is clear that faculty are willing to take advantage of services the library may offer, but the first step is educating faculty in the availability of specialized services."⁴ According to Yang, faculty are willing to use the library if they are educated about the library's special services.⁵

Reeves, Nishimuta, McMillan and Godin say that, "Good relations between librarians and teaching faculty, then, are critical and a variety of avenues should be explored to reach that goal."⁶ Faculty instruct students about where to go and how to use the library. Sometimes, however, "each service point in the library gets questions based on outdated information that's been passed on to students by well meaning faculty."⁷ She continues to say that "We promote our services and resources to the university population each semester by offering library orientation tours, general classes on searching databases and the Internet, and lectures tailored to instructional faculty requests."⁸ "They are quite familiar," she said, "with the literature in their fields and they regularly look at their journals, but many have not kept up with the changes that technology has imposed on information dissemination in their disciplines."⁹

According to Kotter, faculty "may feel ashamed to ask a librarian for help because it might be viewed by their colleagues, and the librarian, as unscholarly."¹⁰ Faculty also need to be aware of the in-service program. Stebelman states that flyers should be sent to all faculty to publicize

workshops and that multiple announcements and different formats are necessary.¹¹

Purpose of the In-Service

One might ask how providing in-services to faculty constitutes marketing library resources. Library marketing is the act of advertising what the library offers and what benefits it brings to the institution. In marketing, librarians illuminate the reasons why academic libraries are campus mainstays.

Faculty in-service imparts key library science and research concepts. Mainly, it teaches the faculty member how to use the library, what the library offers, and what is contained within its print and electronic collections. Also, these sessions teach faculty what their students learn in student-based library instruction sessions. In many ways, faculty in-services teach faculty how they and their students can most effectively conduct research using the library resources and its technology, while utilizing a modern approach.

Using peer-to-peer or group facilitation can also introduce faculty to the different roles and responsibilities of the faculty librarians. For example, an in-service can teach faculty that an instructional librarian focuses their professional work and energies on creating library instruction programs for students. The collection development librarian works with faculty to develop a more comprehensive student-focused and curriculum-driven collection. A serials librarian may determine which online databases should be added to the collection. Without this knowledge, faculty may not know of the academic contributions each librarian makes the whole of library services, or which librarians to contact if they need assistance.

Advertising

Faculty in-service is a free marketing endeavor that only requires a librarian's time, energy, and commitment. When launching a new inservicing program, advertise instruction to faculty, staff and administrators. Advertise the faculty in-service through campus newsletters and flyers. Make announcements at faculty

council or faculty senate meetings. Send emails to faculty distribution lists. Ask faculty liaisons to announce faculty in-service at departmental meetings. If you can be creative and proactive, the free advertisement opportunities seem endless. Once you have conducted several in-servicing sessions, faculty will market the service to other faculty members, a method that will drive up the number of in-servicing sessions provided.

Scheduling

To increase the perceptions of the importance of this service, consider offering sessions by appointment only. Librarians can take their wares to the wise – visit faculty in their offices and in their classrooms. Although we strive to create a library research desk that is welcoming, even the most approachable research area can be intimidating for faculty. Faculty often do not feel comfortable receiving professional instruction in a public setting. For the most proper and effective in-service, ensure privacy by instructing faculty either in their office or you own.

Providing such appointments as “house-calls” also enhances individual attention and makes the session more attractive to faculty. They are not always comfortable receiving instruction at a public desk where their students or other faculty may see them as inexperienced researchers. Faculty will come to you with vastly differently skill levels and research needs. Addressing these differences effectively requires individual and tailored attention.

Services to Market in an In-Service Session

Research Assistance at the Reference Desk

Too long have faculty and students been considered a captive audience of the academic library. Back in the middle 1980s, for example, researchers had few resources outside of the library that they could consult. Books and indexes to journal articles existed only in print, microfiche, or microfilm formats. Due to the recent increased availability of the Internet, and in particular Google Scholar, the academic research audience is often conducting and concluding their research outside the library walls,

without consulting library resources or academic librarians. Because of the pace at which technology changes the research world, it is critical to educate faculty on modern library trends and offerings.

All librarians want research to begin at the reference desk. The reference desk is home base for reference librarians and they whole-heartedly want to answer research questions. An in-service provides the opportunity to deliver this message. In-service allows librarians to teach faculty that the *reference desk* is a place to obtain *research assistance*.

If you believe that the term *reference desk* is an old-fashioned and misunderstood term in today’s modern academic library, then consider this: use an in-service session to begin marketing the reference desk as a *research desk*. Then continue working to rebrand that desk space. When faculty easily understand the purpose of a research desk, they will pass that understanding on to their students. If their students have questions regarding their research assignments, they can visit a librarian at the research desk. This increased understanding of what the desk’s purpose is will concomitantly increase the number of times that students and faculty approach the desk for assistance. An increase in the number of visits is an increase in the number of research questions asked.

Library Instruction

Library instruction teaches students how to use the library resources and to evaluate the research materials they find. We teach students what they need to know about the library. Faculty in-service follows the same process. We teach them what they need to know. While we most often teach library instruction to students in classroom-based groups, we can also teach the faculty either individually or in department-based groups.

During an in-service session, it is worthwhile to discuss how the instruction you are giving the faculty member resembles a library instruction session that you would give to students. Help the faculty better understand the library instruction program. During the in-service, use phrases



such as “this is what students need to understand” or “this is what we can teach students in a library instruction session.” In many instances, the faculty member will be so impressed with the faculty in-service and potential for student instruction, that they help market the instruction program by spreading positive messages regarding instruction to other faculty members.

Once the faculty have been educated on what library instruction offers, they are more inclined to participate. Although library instruction is mainly marketed to faculty, it is designed with the student in mind. Overall, the goal of a library instruction session is to enthusiastically encourage faculty and students to fully utilize all that the library has to offer.

Online Databases

Online databases are electronic indexes used primarily to find academic journal articles, newspaper articles, conference proceedings, and other ephemeral periodical materials. Online databases even contain archival information through resources like the *Humanities and Social Sciences* or *JStor*, with indexing going as far back as 1890. These online databases may contain full-text articles or have articles in abstract or citation-only format, leading researchers to print collections, electronic journals, other databases, or perhaps even to interlibrary loan services. Many faculty who went to colleges and universities prior to 1985, when indexes were still primarily available in print only, may not be aware of the ease in which articles can be obtained through online research. Despite the fact that indexes went online for the first time in 1985, some faculty still now continue to create print-resource based assignments for students. In 2010, online databases have almost exclusively replaced print indices. Marketing online databases accomplishes several goals. First, it educates faculty on how to conduct online research using the latest technology and resources. Second, it educates them on the availability of scholarly information online, especially important to those faculty who question the validity of electronic resources. Third, marketing online databases to faculty enables them to faithfully refer students to online resources that are pro-

vided by library subscriptions. Imparting this knowledge markets library resources.

Faculty also use the resources to conduct professional research and to create library assignments for their students. Marketing online databases and working with the faculty encourages collaboration between faculty and librarians. For example, librarians and faculty can create research assignments together. As faculty members begin to understand that librarians are truly savvy in the use of online resources, they may be willing to co-write assignments or consult librarians as they create research assignments.

Interlibrary Loan

Faculty who studied in large universities believe that smaller college libraries have fewer resources. Smaller libraries do more often focus their collections to mainly support their school programs and departmental curriculum. The breath of the library budget is not able to support infinite research interests.

Library in-servicing provides the perfect chance to market Interlibrary loan (ILL). ILL is a program that expands the availability of scholarly and academic materials beyond the physical and electronic collections of an academic library. It provides full-text articles and print materials from a network of local, statewide, national and international libraries. Explain to the faculty that your collection supports the school curriculum, and that materials supporting a faculty member’s specific needs may not be housed within your campus library. Market ILL so that they understand this service provides them with seemingly endless access to resources around the world.

It is important to market ILL and document delivery because they are emerging services. A plethora of citations are available online. Library subscription-based databases and free internet resources, such as Google Scholar and PubMed, contribute to this surge in availability of citations. With access to more citations, researchers want more articles. The ILL and document delivery programs expand research holdings and provide desk top delivery for faculty and students. In many instances solid ILL and docu-



ment delivery programs are one of the most highly regarded services that a library can offer. What a boost for your library's image. Market that!

Collection Development

Collection development is the range of activities involved in developing what a library owns. A collection encompasses ownership of print and online books, online databases, access to online web-based information, audio-visual media, equipment to use the resources, and special collection items, such as archives, exhibits, or popular fiction collections.

Faculty sometimes need research or instructional materials that the library does not own. Instead of using ILL services, faculty can participate in collection development. Through educating faculty, librarians may teach them that materials supporting their special interests can be purchased. Also, when becoming acquainted with the faculty, the librarians learn more about the faculty's individual publications and scholarly contributions. Getting to know the individual faculty member helps build a collection that houses this person's scholarly achievements.

Additionally, in many cases, faculty will assign a special project that requires students use library books or specific databases. The library may in fact only have a few titles meeting the course assignment needs. Sometimes, the library has none. In these circumstances, students may use interlibrary loan, but ILL normally takes a few days for the item to arrive. Many students, especially undergraduates, do not have time to wait. Even if the acquisitions department rush orders several titles, the titles most likely would not arrive in time for the students to complete the assignment.

Students need access to materials that support their assignments. Without adequate collection development collaboration between faculty and librarians, students can be left without key books and academic resources for their research assignments. When librarians use library in-servicing to market collection development, they

can create a more solid collection: one that supports the needs of the student population.

Reserves

Since many faculty now use online course management systems such as Moodle and Blackboard to post required or additional journal readings, most of the reserve items that exist in library reserves collections are monographs or audiovisual materials. The library reserve collection contains items with limited circulation time frames. Some items circulate for only two-hours within the library only. Other items might circulate for up to seven days outside the library. One of the most beneficial aspects of the program is that the library can house books and audiovisual materials for faculty members who want to make shared resources available to their entire class. Through in-services, faculty can be informed that the library can, according to the faculty directions, restricted access to textbooks, DVDs, CDs or videocassettes.

In the marketing pitch, a librarian can distribute the reserve manager's business cards or other contact information. Librarians can reproduce and distribute handouts that outline policy and procedure information. They can even give a tour of the reserve collection so that faculty see what materials are housed in this collection. A demonstration of how to use the library catalog to access the reserve collection is important to include in the reserve collection marketing pitch.

Faculty with Specialized Research Interests

During in-services, librarians can demonstrate competencies with conducting research in the faculty member's discipline. For example, when providing a library in-service to faculty from the pharmacy department, it is helpful to demonstrate access to evidence-based research within the Cochran databases. Show them that you have access to the Lexi-Comp or the Pharmacy Library databases and demonstrate your skills using it. If the faculty teaches in the liberal arts department instead, you can demonstrate the JStor databases. In the sciences, you might demonstrate Science Direct. Librarians can show they are capable of skillfully teaching students how to use discipline-specific library resources.

Market your skills with the specialized databases in your collection.

Conclusion

The marketing plan is a vital component to a library because it explains where the library is and where it is heading. Faculty in-services, while only one component of the marketing plan, introduces faculty to the key library resources in their areas of research. It explains what services the library offers. It also encourages relationship building, where faculty introduce librarians to additional resources needed for their discipline-specific research and required course work. An organization that has a marketing plan can incorporate faculty in-service into its structure and reap multiple benefits.

Faculty support increases usage statistics in research desk activity, library instruction, interlibrary loan and reserves. It also impacts the quality of collection development. Solid faculty in-servicing can initiate a campus-wide improvement in a library's public image and encourage collaboration between librarians and faculty. Try it, and become a library that works to build bridges across campus and boost the usage of their academic library resources and service.

Endnotes

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