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A Case Study in International Inter-library Co-operation. A pilot project between Mount Saint Vincent University and Bermuda College.

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ABSTRACT

The core values of co-operation and resource sharing between libraries has increased exponentially as libraries, impeded by distance, seek to better serve their students. This has become a mandate as a result of the change in education systems from solely campus restricted, to education by distance. This phenomenon has opened up challenges as well as significant opportunity for developing partnerships between Librarians, making resources and services available to their students and serving students enrolled in international joint programs.

Libraries have since grappled with the ideas of “remote access” and “the remote user” whose needs and expectations of access to library services are the same as the on-site user, and creating “synergy” between partnering institutions. Remote access can be defined as “any non-traditional access to library resources and services from outside the physical confines of the library building.” (Graham & Grodzinski, 2001, para 9) Krista Graham and Alison Grodzinski assert that “because of this librarians have had to intensify their use of remote access technologies, to provide instruction in database selection, searching techniques, and information evaluation to this invisible user”. (para 1) Libraries have also had to develop relationships and expand their networks. This concept is support by the Canadian Library Association’s Guidelines for Library support for Distance and Distributed Learning which says, “Leadership and management of libraries should initiate dialogue, collaboration and develop co-operative partnerships” (para. 4) In this new service environment however, librarians are met with numerous hurdles, for example, failure of the remote access technology to meet the demands of users, and the impersonal nature of this instructional method.

This paper will examine collaboration amongst librarians, focusing on a collaborative project between Mount Saint Vincent University Library and Bermuda College Library to introduce students to services and resources at the libraries of the partner institutions. Issues relating to both the home library at Bermuda College and the remote library at Mount Saint Vincent University in Nova Scotia will be discussed. Strategies, activities and tools used to implement the initiative will be presented.

INTRODUCTION

International partnerships are becoming prevalent in tertiary education. These agreements and memorandums of understanding are often done at the higher administrative levels filling the gaps in program offerings, and increasing enrolment in both institutions. (Marshall, Brandon, Thomas, Kanwar & Lyngra, 2008). Students in these joint programs are often eligible for library services at both institutions though the literature is surprisingly sparse on the relationships within the libraries of institutions involved in these agreements, or on the access of students enrolled in joint programs to the library of the remote institution (Pival & Johnson, 2005). We wish to present an example of co-operation between two (2) librarians, Jiselle Alleyne of Bermuda College and Denyse Rodrigues of Mount Saint Vincent University in providing library instruction for students enrolled in joint programs at their institutions.

Bermuda College and Mount Saint Vincent University enjoy articulation agreements which allow students to begin programmes in Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Applied Arts (Child Studies) and Teacher Certification (Non Degree) at Bermuda College in Hamilton, Bermuda and complete their course of study at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada (hereafter referred to as the Mount). While students have always had access to the libraries at both institutions, students at the Bermuda College campus were less familiar with the resources available remotely to them at the Mount Library. In the 2008/2009 academic year Alleyne and Rodrigues used web conferencing software provided by the Mount to hold a series of workshops to introduce library services available to Bermuda College students enrolled in the joint degree programs. These sessions focused on research skills and an orientation to online library resources.

This project of international collaboration in student library instruction contained the key elements of a successful partnership. There was the shared goal of providing quality research instruction to students enrolled in both institutions. Both librarians were involved in the selection of topics covered in the series. There were clearly defined roles and responsibilities in respect to scheduling of sessions, preparation of session materials, and booking of equipment and software. There was strong administrative support both from program directors and chief library administrators. The project fit well with current instruction

practices and it further enhanced the profiles of staff and advanced the missions of both libraries.

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION BACKGROUND

The transformative nature of distance education has impacted academic institutions and the libraries that offer services to this very unique user group. The impetus to undergo this exploratory study was as a result of an observation, that there were no specialised instructional services for this specific user group, that is, students enrolled in joint programmes at the institutions of, Mount Saint Vincent University and Bermuda College. A second reason was to ensure that students upon transfer from Bermuda College, to the Mount, were equipt with the necessary skills to be successful in their sophomore years at the new institution. In addition participants in the joint program were able to choose from all Mount course offerings to complete their elective course requirements. This sometimes resulted in students choosing electives that were far more research intensive than their core programs which were more oriented towards professional studies. Thirdly, the collaborative project also emerged at the time of the expansion of Bermuda College's Distance Education programme and so the Director of External Programmes and the Librarians at both institutions saw this as an opportune time to collaborate, and lastly, we realised that working in isolation was not in the best interest of the students and this was the tipping point that pushed us to start this collaborative venture. Robert Hayes describes this as "the ethical commitment of librarianship to the concept of collaboration, that no library can be all encompassing and that sharing is the only way to ensure provision of access" (Hayes, 2003, p. 454).

The Bermuda College Library follows the traditional model of library instruction where students are brought to the library and are instructed in the access and use of Library print and electronic resources. The Mount library had been attempting to provide library instruction for their distance students via DVDs distributed by the Distance Learning department and through PDF instruction sheets linked on the library's website. Despite these efforts Alleyne had heard anecdotal reports that students were unfamiliar with the library

resources at the Mount and were having difficulty meeting their academic needs for Mount courses with the Bermuda College library resources. Concurrently Rodrigues had received feedback from Mount instructors that students in the joint program were less likely than other students to use library research resources to complete their assignments.

After consultation between librarians we realised that these traditional models would not give us the end result we wanted, as the students would not be able to grasp the depth of resources available to them at Mount Saint Vincent University if the Bermuda College's Library resources were used in isolation and if the instruction was done in this traditional sense. Secondly, we also felt that using the technology would actually work to our advantage, allowing us to combine the advantages of web based instruction with those of face to face sessions and promote a virtual sense of connection between the two libraries. Neil Howe and William Strauss (2000) support this view when they reported, "library educators must adapt, and they must use technology, include the opportunity for social and interactive learning, and be visual and kinesthetic." Finally, we also felt that the model we created was the best means to help the students acquire the necessary skills required for successful access to the resources. This model, the "Five Session Library Instruction Model" developed by Smiti Gandhi (2003), showed success is guaranteed if the information is packaged in short, focused segments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although there has been much written on the internationalization of tertiary education and the increase in Memorandums of Understanding among institutions (Altbach, 2004), these accounts focus on the impact of these agreements at the wider organizational level rather than the experience of students or librarians studying and working within the context of joint programs. It is interesting that there is an emphasis on partner institutions working together to enhance each other's offerings where there is little overlap in program content. (Marshall, Brandon, Thomas, Kanwar & Lyngra, 2008). It is also relevant to note that the growth in these international arrangements has gone hand in hand with technology assisted learning which allows for distance learning. (McLean & Dew, 2006).

The Standards for Distance Learning Library Services issued by The Association of College and Research Libraries and Guidelines for Library Support of Distance and Distributed Learning in Canada by the Canadian Library Association both clearly state that “when more than one institution is involved in the provision of a distance learning program, each is responsible for the provision of library materials to the students enrolled in its courses” (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2008, para 51; Canadian Library Association, 2000, para. 29). In the international context this has direct implications for library services at participating institutions as the students’ home library will likely not have the collections to fully support the joint programs, and the students must access the partner institution’s library remotely for their course research needs.

While much research has been carried out on the development and assessment of online library services to distance students there are few that focus specifically on programs offered through memorandums of understanding between institutions, and fewer still that speak to the issues involved in working with remote and home libraries. However, one such study that speaks to these issues was done by Paul Pival and Kay Johnson (2004). They report that in a joint program through the University of Calgary, Athabasca University and the University of Lethbridge there were initially some difficulties in coordinating services among the institutions but that it was possible for three university libraries to support one program. They noted that “It can be challenging for students to learn how to interact with more than one library in terms of how to access different systems, resources, and support” (p. 353). A common theme in many studies of services for distance students is that students accessing libraries remotely are often either unaware of, or do not make use of, the services available to them, often preferring to make use of geographically closer libraries (Buck, Islam, and Syrkin, 2006; D’Angelo and Maid, 2004; Slade, 2004). Further to this, in his overview of research done in the area of library services to distance students Alexander Slade (2004) reports that the underutilization of library services point to a need for increased promotion and marketing, publicity, and library instruction, and that particularly when there is an international component that there should be the provision of library instruction and information literacy training that is appropriate for the learning styles of students from other cultures. Stefanie Buck, Ramona Islam and Darby Syrkin (2007) report that the technological emphasis in distance learning is particularly difficult for adult learners returning to higher

education after years in the workforce and that they are particularly vulnerable to library anxiety because many of them graduated in the early stages of the online era (para 1).

Additionally, in terms of collaboration within the area information literacy instruction much of the literature focuses on partnerships between librarians and instructors (Jacobson & Mackey, 2007; Montiel-Overall, 2007; Raspa & Ward, 2000), or to a lesser extent on joint development of web based learning objects (Hansen, 2001; Hansen & Lombardo, 1997). There has also been much written on collaborations in cataloguing, interlibrary loan, and other consortial projects, (Crowther & Trott, 2004; Hope & Peterson, 2002; Reyes, 2006). While there is ample evidence that information literacy instruction is more effective when provided in the context of the course and linked with an assignment (Jacobson and Mackey, 2004; Floyd, Colvin & Bodur 2008), Owusu-Ansah (2003) makes the point that there are also inherent tensions in such relationships and not all faculty member are open to collaboration. While both librarians involved in this pilot project continue to work with faculty on other initiatives, it was felt that there was value in collaborating as librarians to provide information literacy training in their institutions' joint programs.

Regardless of the parties involved, there are lessons to be learned from the literature on partnerships and collaboration. James Hooks, Carl Rahkonen, Chris Clouser, Kelly Heider and Rena Fowler, (2007) report that after a successful pilot project they needed to hire an additional librarian to maintain service levels generated by the collaborative projects with instructors. It was important to both Alleyene and Rodrigues that sustainability and scalability were important criteria for the success of this project. Pival and Johnson (2004) note that clear lines of communication among collaborating partners are important if the needs of the students are to be fully met. They mince no words in stating that "Libraries considering similar collaborations need to avoid turf wars" (p. 354). Janet Crowther and Barry Trott (2004) summarize that the key elements to successful librarian collaborations as including the principles of shared goals and outcomes, defined responsibilities, strong administrative and technical support and trust & respect.

METHODOLOGY

During the summer of 2008 the librarians at Bermuda College and Mount Saint Vincent University communicated by email to plan how they could work together to provide better services to the students enrolled in the Mount Saint Vincent University/Bermuda College joint programs. The sessions were held in a lab at Bermuda College, with Rodrigues providing remote instruction on the Mount Library's related research resources and services using web conferencing software which allowed for voice, instant messaging chat, and live web demonstration. This software was used in many of the Mount distance classes and many of the joint program students were already familiar with the platform. The students had access to a computer so they were able to participate in practice sessions. While the web conferencing software theoretically could have been used to reach students at their homes or workplaces, holding the sessions in a lab allowed for equal and supported access to the required technology. Alleyne provided on-site librarian expertise and ensured that everyone was able to accomplish the session tasks, and clarifying questions were asked when students appeared unsure of a particular point. Rodrigues was able to provide additional information on the Mount Library's resources and services not easily discerned from its website. It also reinforced that the students were able to access librarians and library services at both institutions for their courses.

As library research instruction is part of the regular duties of both librarians, these web conference sessions were held as part of the regular work load and did not impose a cost on either organization. Heeding the advice of Pival and Johnson (2004) to reduce the barriers to communication between the collaborating partners, Alleyne was granted the status of 'adjunct instructor' within the Mount Library. This allowed her to be provided with access to the Mount Library's electronic research resources and to better assist students with their research queries. Both librarians were fortunate to be well supported by their institutions in arranging for the necessary equipment, space and access to electronic resources.

Alleyne worked with the Director of External Programmes at Bermuda College to promote the sessions with the joint program students. The scheduling of the sessions took into consideration both full and part-time students schedules. It was decided to hold the sessions at lunch time which allowed students engaged in full time employment to attend. Students were asked to confirm their attendance and to also to provide their program of study. This

allowed the librarians to prepare examples and research scenarios that would be relevant to the students' areas of study.

In the fall term one session was held. It was called *Introduction to Library Resources* and focused primarily on ensuring that students knew how to login to the library resources and how to access the electronic collections. In the feedback for this session and in the planning for the following semester both librarians felt there was a need to move beyond simple library orientation and move towards information literacy instruction. It was immediately apparent from the responses of the students that once the students knew where and what resources were available to them, that they wanted to know how to use them more effectively for the purposes of their courses. In the winter term 4 sessions were held, a repeat of *Introduction to Library Resources* and in the following weeks, *Using RefWorks for Bibliographies*, *Using Google Scholar* and *Finding Quality Resources from the Internet*, and *Three Steps to Effective Journal Article Searching*.

The session *Using ReWorks for Bibliogrpahies* focused on using proper citation practices with the use of the RefWorks platform to assist in citation management and bibliography creation. *Using Google Scholar and Finding Quality Resources from the Internet* emphasised the critical evaluation of web sources, and how to check the Mount Library for access when proprietary journal articles appeared in web search results. *Three Steps to Effective Journal Article Searching* focused on the development of search strategies including the identification of research topics, generating keyword search terms, and the use of Boolean search techniques.

The final search session was also open to all Mount students who could attend the session virtually. As the focus of the sessions is for the joint program students little promotion was done with other students. Nevertheless one student did attend and the interaction went well. While the focus of these sessions will always be on meeting the needs of the joint program students, this was an attempt to allow for more connection among the students of both campuses.

RESULTS

The attendance over the five sessions was 33 students. All sessions were recorded and links to view them were sent to students who had not been able to attend the lab sessions. Both librarians were pleased with the outcome of the sessions. An advantage of Alleyne's physical presence in the sessions was that she was able to notice students' body language and to check their progress with the practice exercises. Several times in each session Alleyne would let Rodrigues know that a particular step needed to be clarified or that a pause was needed for all students to catch up. Designating Rodrigues to run the demonstrations allowed the students to make the acquaintance of the remote librarian. In the weeks following the sessions both librarians were contacted about the use of resources for students assignments. It was clear that students were moving from simply finding and accessing resources to using the tools available to them to effectively meet their information needs. The only challenge encountered was of a technological nature during the first session held in the fall term. Both librarians are now better prepared to deal with such contingencies.

EVALUATION

The success of this project was based on critical elements, firstly, the mutual respect and trust both librarians displayed towards each other. Barbara M. Allen and Arnold Hirshon (1998) argue that "collaborating libraries in order to achieve their goals must have a high degree of respect, and recognise the value in the collaboration." Before and throughout the duration of the pilot project, both Alleyne and Rodrigues had never met, yet still the librarians maximised the expertise of each other, freely communicating and sharing information, as well as providing on the spot training in the use of the technology where it was required. This reciprocity was key in bringing about a successful relationship and a successful project. This respect was also magnified despite the differences in sizes of the institutions involved. The Mount was by far the larger institution with greater technological capabilities, which could have created an imbalanced situation, with Bermuda College being swallowed up, not having a say in the direction of the project. However this never materialised, and despite the various capacities to deliver instruction on e-learning platforms, both institutions were able to

enhance each other's capabilities and so not only the students benefited, but the institutions as well. An example of this spirit of cooperation as aforementioned was the provision to Alleyne with Mount adjunct instructor status. This allowed Alleyne full access to the resources used by the students in the joint programme and allowed both librarians to be equal partners in the instructional sessions.

The second element that ensured the success of the project was the method of delivery chosen. Following the model developed by Gandhi (2003), having the session's span over (5) compact sessions, we were able to firstly, maintain the interest and enthusiasm of the students. Gandhi's model also proposed that "instruction session be kept simple to cater to students with various technical abilities." (Gandhi, 2003) Thus in our planning the format of instruction we incorporated this into the delivery and as a result all students were able to fully participate in a non- threatening environment. One expert in speaking about different learning styles also advised that instructors "adapted instructions to the various cognitive styles of the students." (Ausburn & Ausburn, 1978) Therefore, we were very cognizant of the different learning styles, based on the mixed composition of the group, the group was a mixture of different age groups, gender and abilities, and so we expected there to be a gap that needed to be streamlined. But through the interactive nature of the sessions and the medium chosen for instruction, we were able to reach all learning styles present and thus our goals were obtained.

The third element that ensured success was the expertise of both librarians to overcome the Barriers to Collaboration. One initial barrier to collaboration was the technology, as we began our first set of sessions we were faced with some technical difficulty even after a test run was done and the all clear was given, however due to the familiarity of use with the Elluminate Live software by Rodrigues we were able to fix the problem in addition to setting up an alternative if we should face this difficulty again. Clearly, Rodrigues was the technological driver in this collaboration, but this project has opened the door for Bermuda College to expand there technological capabilities to serve this specific user group.

That the project filled a need, and placed the students on a much more solid foundation to be successful was the ultimate reason for success of the project. Whilst it has been discussed that there are various kinds of library collaborations, we felt that this type of collaboration was filling a gap in the library literature and so fuelled our determination to complete the project.

Bermuda College also felt that as a community college this is the direction they wanted to take to enhance their teaching. Lastly, we felt that there were benefits to be gained for all parties involved, Mount Saint Vincent University, Bermuda College, faculty and the students, through this collaboration. But most significantly, we saw this pilot project to be the model to be used in similar arrangements where because of articulations agreements; there would always be a ready group of distance students to be served.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the activity of libraries collaborating is one that should be encouraged, and especially in relation to international library collaboration this must be further explored. Bermuda College Library is constrained by limited resources and can only go thus far in their technological advancements. However with the mandate to effectively preparing students for transfer into four year institutions, this can still be done through the articulation agreements entered and the establishment of relationships like this one between the libraries of the Mount and Bermuda College. In the words of Colin Finnerty, this collaboration has “proven that the belief in collaboration is a continuing force in libraries and the environment is ripe to foster this growth.” (Finnerty, 2004)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our experience through this Case Study in international inter-library co-operation we recommend that both Bermdua College and Mount Saint Vincent Universities should consider:

➤ **More effective marketing strategies.**

We believe with expanding our marketing strategy, capitalising on the technology, For example, emails, and texts as well taking a closer look at the placement of the sessions, we believe that we would get a greater number of students attending.

➤ **More stringent quantification and measurements- Pre & Post tests.**

We believe that it is important to measure our success, and so as we go forward, there needs to be the inclusion of measurements like, pre and post interviews, surveys and learning styles inventory tests.

➤ **The production of e-learning materials for example user guides and online information skills modules.**

We believe that as we go forward with this collaboration, the technological Capabilities must expand to use online instruction guides and tutorials.

➤ **Exploring this type of collaboration with other libraries joined through articulation agreements.**

We believe this to be a great model to be used to initiate collaboration with institutions that Bermuda College are involved in articulation agreements.

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