

## Earlham's BI enhances teaching and learning

By Larry Hardesty, Jamie Hastreiter, and David Henderson

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### *The Earlham College-Eckerd College Bibliographic Instruction Conference*

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On February 5-7, 1992, Eckerd College hosted the fifth Earlham College-Eckerd College Bibliographic Instruction Conference. More than 65 librarians, classroom faculty, and administrators representing more than 40 institutions of higher education from the U.S., Puerto Rico, and Canada attended. The conference focused on the bibliographic instruction program at Earlham College and adapting it to the needs of other institutions.

Evan Farber, long-time head librarian at Earlham College, gave the keynote address, providing an overview of "Library Use Instruction at Earlham College." He described the Earlham program as a structured one in which librarians take a proactive role in encouraging and facilitating cooperation between librarians and classroom faculty. Farber emphasized that the main function of the library should be to enhance the teaching/learning process. This, he stated, should be the measure of the library's success in meeting institutional objectives. Farber stressed the need to understand the perspectives of the classroom faculty members and the importance of ensuring success in students' early experiences with the library. He cautioned that while the Earlham program is not totally exportable, institutions can adapt it to meet their particular situations.

### **Faculty describe BI experience**

Following Farber's presentation, three classroom faculty from Earlham College described their experiences with bibliographic instruction.

Gordon Thompson, professor of English, reported on the involvement of the library in Earlham's freshman year humanities course and described working with Earlham's librarians to develop a course-related bibliographic instruction assignment in an upper-level literary criticism course. Thompson concluded that literature students can learn to use the library well only through repeated assignments that start simply and become progressively more complicated.

Bill Stephenson, professor of biology, described the comprehensive, sequential bibliographic instruction program developed by biologists and librarians at Earlham College that has existed for more than 20 years. Stephenson said, "Our students, like those in other disciplines, repeatedly rate learning to access the literature as the most important thing they have learned in biology at Earlham." One student project involves developing a poster session, modeled on similar sessions conducted at professional conferences.

Welling Hall, professor of political science, reported on a bibliographic instruction project using structural content analysis to explore Soviet foreign policy. Hall described her first contact with Farber, which occurred when he interviewed her as a prospective faculty member and described how, within a week of her being on campus, another librarian contacted her about bibliographic instruction. Hall said that she sees Earlham librarians as colleagues who are genuinely interested in her students.

Ann Bevilacqua, creator of "Research Assistant" (a HyperCard instructional program), provided an overview of how computer-assisted instruction can augment other methods of bibliographic instruction. She described programs ranging from drill and practice exercises to interactive hypertext programs. In the small group

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sessions each afternoon, Bevilacqua demonstrated the use of "Research Assistant."

### **Working with the faculty**

Evan Farber led off the second day with a discussion of alternatives to term paper assignments. These ranged from annotated bibliographies to the aforementioned poster sessions. He then demonstrated his bibliographic instruction interview technique with two Eckerd College faculty members, John Goodwin, professor of chemistry, and Bill Winston, professor of sociology. Farber emphasized that librarians can serve a valuable function on campus as nonthreatening respondents to classroom faculty trying to think through new assignments and courses.

Gordon Thompson then returned to provide a provocative and witty description of "The Recalcitrant Faculty Member" as someone who is not only not interested in bibliographic instruction, but does not know what it is and does not want to know. Thompson listed reasons for these attitudes and how librarians may overcome them.

A panel discussion titled "Working with the Classroom Faculty" followed Thompson's presentation. The panel included two Eckerd College classroom faculty members and two Eckerd College library faculty members. Larry Hardesty, director of libraries at Eckerd College, spoke of the importance of initial contacts with the faculty during the interview and orientation process. David Henderson, coordinator of instructional services, spoke about the need for librarians to become involved in campus life outside the library building, to serve on committees, and to work to be perceived as a true faculty colleague concerned with the educational process as a whole. Sandra Harris, professor of human resources, and Bill Winston spoke on how they had become involved in bibliographic instruction.

### **Students and administrators on BI**

A "Student Response to Bibliographic Instruction" panel composed of five Eckerd College students (Matt Staman, Debra Nail, Susan Moss, Jason Palmateer, and Eric Schultz) emphasized the importance of librarians being helpful and approachable. They talked about how intimi-

dating the library can be and how instruction can serve to ease their anxiety levels.

Lloyd Chapin, vice-president and dean of the faculty at Eckerd College, offered his perspective on "Bibliographic Instruction from an Administrative Point-of-View." He spoke of the need for librarians to communicate regularly with administrators, not only about problems, but also about improvement and advances in the library. He emphasized the need to share comparative statistics and to keep administrators informed about trends in the library world. Chapin also emphasized the many opportunities available for librarians to work with class-



**Evan Farber describes Earlham's BI program.**

room faculty members outside the library building, seeing this as a means of promoting good relations. He stressed that librarians should be seen as full participants in the academic program.

Opening the Friday afternoon session, Larry Hardesty spoke on "Bibliographic Instruction and Collection Development." He provided

data from OCLC that suggests that even small liberal arts colleges have highly distinct collections. This information, he believes, emphasizes the importance of working with classroom faculty members to help them become familiar with the idiosyncrasies of particular library collections. It also stresses the need to check holdings before bibliographic instruction assignments are made to ensure that students have the opportunity to succeed.

In her wrap-up, Donna Trent, professor of management at Eckerd College, emphasized that although the Earlham program may not be wholly exportable, many aspects of it can be adapted to the needs of other institutions. Trent stressed "an individual equipped with knowledge of the process of learning . . . is prepared to enter the contemporary world that demands abilities to evaluate, predict, and adapt to changing environmental, social, and technical change." She concluded that bibliographic instruction is an opportunity for a college to develop a common ground among classroom faculty, administrators, and librarians.

Pierian Press will publish the proceedings of this conference. For further information, contact Larry Hardesty, director of library services, Eckerd College. ■

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