

Integrating outreach and building partnerships

Expanding our role in the learning community

by Jon E. Cawthorne

In the wake of the technological changes that have allowed dramatic increases in access, academic librarians must find new ways to communicate their resources and services to users who do not enter their doors. As critical members of their learning communities, libraries must develop new strategies for teaching students the important information skills they will need for future success. As a result, marketing and outreach have become essential library tasks.

This year ACRL President Tyrone H. Cannon chose "Partnerships and Connections: The Learning Community as Knowledge Builders" as his theme, and it is certainly timely. Collectively, we are beginning to see progress in our efforts to build effective relationships throughout our campuses. Recently, outreach has come to mean an activity focused on the entire learning community. Librarians are developing new strategies to reach out to administrators, staff, students and teaching faculty, all of whom have critical roles in supporting our goals for more effective use of library resources and services.

Librarians are now regularly making valuable connections to undergraduate and graduate students. We are spending more time understanding how the library can benefit international students, student athletes, honors students, students from under-represented groups, and students with disabili-

ties, just to name a few groups. Librarians are partnering with student services staff to welcome students to their campuses and provide valuable orientations. Librarians and administrators are more often seeking input and feedback from students by meeting student government leaders and other student organizations. Some library directors are establishing student advisory boards. In turn, students become stronger library supporters.

Our outreach to academic departments and faculty continues, but librarians are also building strong partnerships with campus research centers and institutes. Despite the differences in our learning communities, there remains a common thread, and we can learn from each other.

At the ALA Annual Conference in Toronto, the ACRL Board of Directors approved the formation of an Academic Library Outreach Discussion Group to support its sixth strategic direction, which asserts that "ACRL is an effective and dynamic organization that continually enhances its capacity to create its future and assess and improve its performance in carrying out its mission."¹ Clearly, more librarians are interested in discussing how to reach our users and how to increase appreciation for the value of our services, thereby creating a broader base of support and a better future for libraries.

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Elizabeth Salzer, university librarian at Santa Clara University, captures the imperative when she says, "It is no longer sufficient for 21st-century academic librarians to simply advertise their services within the physical confines of their buildings. Librarians must take a proactive approach, viewing the strategic marketing of their services and resources as critical to their continued survival. Librarians cannot simply talk about their importance to the 'learning community,' they must become a part of it, actively learning the skills needed to market their libraries."²

It is a challenge academic librarians have embraced as a measure of leadership in the learning communities they serve; a challenge that, when met, will make their collaborations with students, teaching faculty, and the entire learning community more productive, more rewarding.

Outreach and the academic library

Through meaningful partnerships with students, teaching faculty, departments, research centers and institutes, library outreach can have its greatest impact on the manner in which the educational community deals with lifelong learning. Today, librarians must acknowledge that many of our users are convinced they have found "all that's out there," after only a click of the mouse and a .34 second wait for a Google search to be completed.

The truth is, academic libraries provide access to a range of information that is unrivaled by the modern explosion of online material. A truly informed citizenry requires the ability to assess and interpret information in all its forms. We understand this, yet faculty complain that students look for easy ways around research; they lift, clean, and copy essays and term papers off the Internet. Business leaders complain that too many young professionals would rather click, copy, and submit materials off the Internet rather than read, interpret, and adapt information from the variety of sources to produce solid conclusions. The trend to "click and run" on the part of so many is counter to librarians as "knowledge builders," who give users the skills to practice "lifelong learning."

This notion was confirmed in April 2003, when the Academic Library Advisory Com-

mittee (ALAC) of the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) commissioned a study by Outsell, Inc. that focused on marketing and outreach. Acknowledging that an inordinate number of our current and potential users rely much too heavily on Internet search engines, the study recognized that the ultimate goal of library outreach is to raise awareness and increase use of the library.³

One of the key findings was, "If we define outreach in the broadest sense of proactive communication and interaction with library stakeholders, the study reveals that many forms of outreach are embedded into provision of library services and collections. Library services provide a natural intersection between library collections, technology, facilities, and professional and other service staff and thus provide prime opportunities for promotion and outreach."⁴

In an even more recent briefing of September 19, 2003, entitled "The Changing Roles of Content Deployment Functions: Academic Information Professionals," Outsell notes that the "academic mission is broadening. This year's study shows more academic libraries are focusing on serving multiple units or their entire institution globally, rather than one department or operating unit. Expanding service in the shadow of today's funding constraints will require new ways of reaching users and broadening access via new technologies and business models."⁵

Later, in the same Outsell briefing, there is more reason to be optimistic that some efforts are beginning to pay off. In this study, libraries claim an average of 10,236 potential users and 4,944 actual users. Outsell notes that we are reaching "nearly half our potential users with information services, a very healthy market penetration percentage that shows that these libraries are successfully creating awareness and attracting users."⁶

The briefing goes on to note, "Academic libraries made significant progress in the past year, getting critical management and marketing practices in place. Nearly half of library administrators prepare formal business plans and more are engaged in business and strategic planning than before. They are making a strong push to conduct user needs assessments, along with formal tracking and user satisfaction studies. With resource con-

straints prevailing, libraries need to pay more attention to implementing ROI studies to ensure they have the information they need to measure and increase their value proposition, along with building more formal marketing/outreach plans to reach their targeted users.⁷⁷

As a result of remote and improved access to information, we are beginning to see fundamental changes in the way libraries engage our respective learning communities. Outreach and marketing have become essential parts of our daily duties. Partnerships and connections between academic librarians and teaching faculty are essential for future success. We are beginning to realize that partnerships and connections with students have some remarkable outcomes as well.

Connections with students

Establishing partnerships and connections with students begins with listening and ends with the delivery of a consistent message. Students must know the library has welcoming, inviting spaces for study. They also have dedicated faculty and staff who work directly with users and those who work behind the scenes; all of them committed to quality instruction, outreach, and reference. Academic libraries are increasingly providing a great service to the learning community through access to electronic journals.

According to Laurie A. Machining, "Even with continual electronic access (24/7), students still demand longer library hours to have a place to study. Academic libraries are a refuge for those who live in noisy dorms or need a place conducive for study."⁷⁸ While the request for study space is constant, rarely do we find cases where students are actually willing to pay for it. But that's exactly what happened at San Diego State University (SDSU).

In a university-wide survey of students, the library was rated as the most important campus resource. In March 2002, the Associated Student Council leaders at SDSU proposed an important student fee increase to \$10 to support the survey results on the spring ballot. When the vote passed, the library used the funds to provide 24-hour access to a portion of the library whenever school is in session.

"Student leaders at SDSU, particularly the Associated Students Council, deserve much

credit for strongly endorsing the fee. The student newspaper also contributed to the positive outcome. The *Daily Aztec* not only encouraged students to open their pocketbooks by voting for the fee, but spent much of a long editorial encouraging more university budget support for the library as well. SDSU students have demonstrated where their priorities lie,"⁷⁹ said Library Dean Connie Vinita Dowell.

In 2003, the library continues to provide 24-hour access, and it has proved very popular. With limited publicity, the students managed to find the 24-hour facility on campus, and use increased as the semester continued. The connection between student needs and library and information access would not have happened without strong leadership. More importantly, says Dowell, "given the opportunity, today's SDSU students exhibit the same commitment to education shared by their parents and previous generations."¹⁰ With such a commitment on the student side, connections between teaching faculty and librarians become equally important.

Librarian and teaching faculty

Partnering with teaching faculty is one way to ensure students are exposed to information competence. Earlier this year, California State University held a series of successful workshops on information competency.¹¹ Librarians were paired with teaching faculty from biological sciences, counseling and education psychology, history, and the first-year experience. During the workshops, participants discussed information competence projects and resolved to bring what they learned back to their respective campuses.

When teaching faculty and librarians work together closely, students benefit. Patrick Sullivan, one of the participants at the first-year experience workshop and a SDSU reference librarian, said the discussions and outcomes were effective. "One of the central pieces was evaluating the assignments given to students from faculty. After interesting discussions about incorporating information competency concepts, faculty seemed very open to consider changes to their assignments, particularly when the suggestions came from other faculty."¹²

This is an excellent, effective model created by the California State University system. The challenge for college and research libraries across the country is to build partnerships and connections with teaching faculty who are enthusiastic not only about integrating information competency, but championing the potential with their colleagues as well.

These workshops were successful because librarians and teaching faculty worked together to create an effective library assignment. As Evan Farber once said, "When that cooperative relationship works well, it can result in assignments that approach, if not reach, what I consider the ideal: where both the professor's objectives and the librarian's objectives are not only achieved, but are mutually reinforcing the teacher's objectives being those that help students attain a better understanding of the course's subject matter, and the librarian's objectives being

those that enhance the students' ability to find and evaluate information."¹³

Conclusion

These examples of partnerships and connections represent only a few of the thousands developing at colleges and universities. We must constantly learn how to better market our services and resources. As I stated earlier, collectively we are beginning to see progress in our outreach effort as we build effective relationships throughout our campuses. Administrators, staff, teaching faculty, and students—all important members of our learning communities—have critical roles in encouraging the support and effective use of libraries.

Notes

1. "ACRL Board of Directors' actions, June 2003," *C&RL News* 64, no. 8 (September 2003): 518–521.

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(“Navigating a tight job market” continued from page 663)

Perhaps most importantly, you should not get discouraged, but should be persistent in your search. In the current market, it can take an average of three to six months to find a job, so new graduates might not expect to have a job lined up upon graduation. But with time and patience, they will find openings.

Asked what advice he would give new graduates looking for library jobs, James Matarazzo, former dean of the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science, said to make concessions about “where you will live, how far you will drive, what kind of library you will work in. Make those concessions up front and then apply. There’s a job for you.”¹¹

Notes

1. Rebecca T. Lenzini, “The Graying of the Library Profession: A Survey of Our Professional Association and Their Responses,” *Searcher*, 10, no. 7 (2002): 88–97. Library Literature Database, WilsonWeb (accessed April 28, 2003).

2. James Matarazzo, “Library Human Resources: The Y2K Plus 10 Challenge,” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 26, no. 4

(2000): 223–4. Library Literature Database, WilsonWeb (accessed April 28, 2003).

3. Jennifer Jacobson, “A Shortage of Academic Librarians,” *Chronicle of Higher Education Career Network*, August 14, 2002, chronicle.com/jobs/2002/08/2002081401c.htm (accessed May 1, 2003).

4. W. Lee Hisle, “Top Issues Facing Academic Libraries: A Report of the Focus on the Future Task Force,” *College and Research Libraries News*, 63, no. 10 (November 2002). Library Literature Database, WilsonWeb (accessed May 1, 2003).

5. Mark Clayton, “Outlook Mixed for Nation’s Librarians,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 8, 2003. Lexis Nexis Database (April 23, 2003).

6. Serena Enger, “November Trustees Meeting,” *The Real Sheet* 32 (2003): 5–6.

7. Clayton, “Outlook Mixed.”

8. Katharine Hansen, *A Foot in the Door* (California: Ten Speed Press, 2000), 16.

9. *Ibid.*, 67–72.

10. Kate Wendleton, *Getting Interviews* (New Jersey: Career Press, 2000).

11. James Matarazzo, interview by author, April 29, 2003, in Boston, Massachusetts. ■

In an ocean of information...



Participants in the 2003 survey included:

- **American Association of Health Sciences Libraries**
- **Military Education Research Library Network**
- **Oberlin Libraries Group**
- **OhioLINK Libraries**
- **SCONUL Libraries**

and other academic, special, and public libraries in the U.S., U.K., Netherlands, and Canada.

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Libricide: The Regime-Sponsored Destruction of Books and Libraries in the Twentieth Century, by Rebecca Knuth (277 pages, July 2003), argues that government-authorized book-burning often precedes or accompanies genocide, since the obliteration of a people cannot be accomplished without destroying its printed history. Knuth offers the case studies of Nazi Germany, the Croatian and Bosnian Serbs, Iraq in Kuwait, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and China's takeover of Tibet as examples of extremist ideologies that attempted to eradicate competing cultural resources. \$39.95. Praeger. ISBN 0-275-98088-X.

Musings, Meanderings, and Monsters, Too: Essays on Academic Librarianship, edited by Martin H. Raish (195 pages, July 2003), consists of 19 chapter-length, informal ruminations on the disquieting problems that threaten to change academic librarianship as we know it—primarily the escalating need to teach critical-thinking skills and information literacy to students, and the transformative effect of information technology on the profession. Contributors include Barbara Fister, David Isaacson, Ilene Rockman, Diana Shonrock,

and Tony Amodeo. \$24.95. Scarecrow. ISBN 0-8108-4767-1.

October 1962: The "Missile" Crisis As Seen from Cuba, by Tomás Diez Acosta (333 pages, October 2002), presents the flip side of Kennedy's showdown with Khrushchev from the perspective of the Cubans, who often get forgotten in accounts of the struggle between the superpowers. Acosta was a 15-year-old literacy worker in the Cuban army at the time, and since 1987 he has been a historian at the Institute of Cuban History in Havana. The author sees the drama as the Cuban revolutionary government's firm stand against both U.S. plans to overthrow Castro and the Soviets' Operation Anadyr, which called for the deployment of 42,000 Russian troops on the island. Supplemented with many little-seen photographs and documentation. \$24.00. Pathfinder. ISBN 0-87348-956-X.



Also from the same publisher is *Marianas in Combat*, by Teté Puebla (101 pages, March 2003), the highest-ranking woman general in the Cuban army, who in a series of interviews describes the women's platoon in the Cuban revolution and the role of women in the armed services. \$14.00. ISBN 0-87348-957-8. ■

(“Integrating . . .” continued from page 669)

2. *Toolkit for academic and research libraries* (Chicago: ACRL, 2003): 4.
3. Outsell, Inc., “Outreach and information resources outreach services study,” *Custom Report* (April 4, 2003): 3.
4. *Ibid.*, 6.
5. Outsell, Inc., “The changing roles of content deployment functions: Academic information professionals” *Information about Information Briefing* 6, no. 20 (September 19, 2003): 6.
6. *Ibid.*, 12.
7. *Ibid.*, 24.
8. Laurie A. Machining, “The information commons: The academic library of the fu-

ture” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* (April 2003): 243.

9. Connie Vinita Dowell, “Signs of student dedication” *San Diego Union Tribune*, Opinion Section, September 4, 2002.

10. *Ibid.*

11. For more information on the Information Competence Workshop, visit www.calstate.edu/ls/Meetings.shtml.

12. Interview with Patrick Sullivan, business librarian at San Diego State University, September 18, 2003.

13. Evan Farber, “Faculty-librarian cooperation: A personal retrospective” *Reference Services Review* (Bradford, 1999), vol. 27, chap. 3:229. ■