Jessica Albano

The Must List[1]

Lattés, magnets, and six other ways to connect with your users

Subject librarian is an all-encompass-ing phrase. It assumes that one plays many roles in an academic library—liaison, selector, instructor, researcher, and activist. Playing each of these roles provides op-portunities for librarians to uphold the core purpose or mission of an academic library which ACRL President Frances Maloy states "is to enhance teaching and learning."[2]

It's more than a name …

The foundation of subject librarianship is being the liaison to an academic department or school. The effectiveness of the subject li-brarian depends on the strength of his or her relationships with the faculty and students in the department. This column is about the ways subject librarians at the University of Washington creatively wear their titles—his-tory librarian, English studies librarian, edu-cation librarian, library and information sci-ence librarian….

Get in their space

It is not enough to sit in the library and ex-pect your faculty and students to find you for help. We are paid to consider our us-ers in almost every decision that we make and task that we complete. Their days, on the other hand, do not revolve around their librarian. We must constantly remind them of our presence. How? Send each faculty member a magnetic business card so that your contact information can hang in their office year-round. Hold office hours in the departments for several hours each week. Regularly attend faculty meetings. Get per-mission to display the covers of new books on department bulletin boards in high-traf-fic areas. Socialize with faculty and students by attending research talks, fundraisers, and other special events.

Shop till you drop

Identify and purchase materials—print and electronic—that fill the information needs of your faculty and students, as well as those researchers of multidisciplinary topics that may also need items in your subject area. A subject librarian can get by reading reviews and selecting materials that "sound" as if they would be useful to researchers in the subject area; however, in today's tight bud-get climate, it pays to know their research needs. How? Look at faculty Web sites to keep abreast of their current research. Read syllabi to stay in tune with the needs of un-dergraduates. Browse the required textbook section for your department at the campus bookstore.

Take every opportunity to communicate with faculty and graduate students. Encour-age them to send purchase suggestions to you using any means—e-mail, marked-up catalogs, or phone messages. If funding is available, give each new faculty member and possibly graduate students a voucher to purchase one item for the library (we have a $100 limit). Adding a bookplate with the faculty member's name will publicize the

Jessica Albano is communication studies librarian and assistant newspaper librarian at the University of Washington Libraries, e-mail: jalbano@u.washington.edu.

person's contribution to the collection. Give them free beverages. During orientations with new graduate students, some subject librarians give "Free Latté with _____" coupons. When the graduate students redeem their "Free Latté with Jessica" coupons, we get acquainted and discuss their research interests over coffee in the library café.

Show and tell

I don't have to explain the merits of library instruction to the readers of this publication, so I will take this opportunity to explain a simple lesson that I learned last week after teaching 36 students taking an Asian American cinema course. Much to my surprise and chagrin (and later delight at having the free feedback), the professor asked the students to fill out a four-question evaluation form. In response to "In this talk, what did you totally disagree with?" 11 students disagreed with how easy I made research look. One student wrote: "I disagree with how easy Jessica made all the different research techniques look. From my experience, searching for newspaper articles, academic journals, and books pertaining to certain topics can be a very difficult and time-consuming task; especially when there are so many links. It's very easy to get lost in such a huge, interconnected database." [The student refers to the Libraries' Web site, which encompasses the library catalog and hundreds of research databases.]

Most would agree that showing "canned" searches helps us to feel more prepared and to avoid uncomfortable moments in front of the class, but I now know that some students would like to see that I am human. How? It is as simple as asking them to call out research topics, then vocalizing my thought process as I begin from the library's homepage and proceed to select and search databases for information about that topic.

Another student taught me that even 20-minute instruction sessions can connect a librarian with her students. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry when one of my faculty members gave me 20 minutes to meet with his 100 students last quarter. Since time was of the essence, I focused on the top three things that they needed to know: 1) I am their librarian and they can contact me for help with this and any other communication class; 2) the differences between popular and academic literature; 3) the URL for the Web page that I created for the class. I not only made an impression on the 20 or so students who contacted me for help throughout the quarter, but one of the students showed up at my office this week saying, "I doubt you remember me, but I was in the new media class last quarter. Can you also help me with my senior thesis?"

Publish pathfinders

Why do students and even faculty prefer to search the Web? Because they can go directly to their favorite search engine, type in a few words, and retrieve adequate information within the first handful of hits. Remember the student comment above? She became frustrated by the complexity of a library Web site that required her to select appropriate library databases, use Boolean operators, identify relevant citations, and then locate the actual text of the articles. Pathfinders or Web subject guides simplify the first stage of the research process—selecting the appropriate databases.

Over half the students in that Asian American cinema course said that they were "surprised" that I had created a Web page specifically for their class. The page includes a photo of Anna May Wong, my name and e-mail address, and a list of print and electronic resources in the library that will help them to complete their research projects.[3] This is a quick and powerful way to help students days and months after the instruction session. Especially if you only have 20 minutes to spend with them!

General Web subject guides will help those students who don't meet with you in an instruction session or a research consultation. A committee of subject librarians recently redesigned the "Resources by Subject" pages on our library Web site.[4] The

goal of the project was to create basic subject pages for the novice researcher that are consistent (common look and content) and provide browsable lists of selected, "best bet" resources. In addition, these pages have become tools for connecting users with their subject librarian.

Answer burning questions

First, make yourself available—in person and virtually—to help students and faculty with their research. Staff the reference or information desk in your library. Have an open door policy so faculty and students feel comfortable just dropping in to say "hello." If possible, schedule virtual office hours through a chat reference service. No matter if you answer a reference question in person, through e-mail, or via chat, sincerely encourage the person to contact you if he needs help in the future.

Second, make sure that students and faculty know that you are available to help. How? Take every opportunity to tell them. At the beginning of each term, e-mail your faculty and remind them to include your contact information on the course syllabus and Web site. Make sure that this information is easily accessible through the library's Web site. The number of e-mail reference questions that I received last quarter more than doubled as a result of having my e-mail address on the communication subject Web page. Being involved in faculty and student research will not only help them to obtain information, but it will also help you to select the materials that they need.

Be a "hysteric" librarian for freedom[5]

Librarians, faculty, and students alike can create change as long as they engage in the process. How? Librarians have a long history of upholding intellectual freedom (excluding those who ban books from their own library shelves). Subject librarians can direct some energy toward the scholarly communication crusade. Ask to include scholarly communication on the agenda at the next faculty meeting. If you're not quite

comfortable speaking to the issue, ask the expert at your library to join you. Since our library expert and I spoke to my department, I have been contacted for advice on how to find a publisher for a new journal and whether or not a professional organization should sign a contract with EBSCO.

Beyond academia, we can encourage our students to be active citizens by hosting events such as The September Project. "The September Project is a collection of people, groups, and organizations working to create a day of engagement, a day of conversation, a day of democracy."[6] On Saturday, September 11, 2004, people gathered at 474 libraries in all 50 states, as well as 13 venues in 7 other countries, to share their thoughts about democracy, citizenship, and patriotism through talks, roundtables, performances, and more. Libraries are perfect spaces for such nonpartisan events because they are free, open to the public, and distributed worldwide.

Ones to watch …

Subject librarians serve as a bridge between library and user, between collections and service. Nothing can stop a creative and proactive subject librarian from leading an academic library to fulfill its mission of connecting people with knowledge. And I mean nothing. Just the other day I met with a senior communication major who needed help with the literature review for her senior thesis. She may as well have put a knife through my heart when she said that a handful of other students working on their senior theses did not know that I was their librarian. I encouraged her to spread the word; then, after she left, I pulled bookmarks with my contact information on the back and sent them to each of my faculty with a note reminding them that I am willing and available to help them and their students with their research.

Notes

1. The Must List is a column that appears in each issue of *Entertainment Weekly*. The staff lists the top ten "things" (books, mov-

• ACRL's ad revenues, a significant portion of the Association's revenues, have dropped dramatically,

• The dues of the organization have not increased since 1990/1 (this dues increase was approved by membership on the 1989 ballot).

• ACRL has the lowest dues of any ALA divisions and is the only division that provides two publications as a perquisite of membership.

• In ACRL, the cost of providing basic member services is $75/member/year.

• Overall, expenses are going up and revenues are going down, with the result that the Association is rapidly spending down its operating reserve.

• The association needs additional revenues to forward the strategic plan.

Be it resolved, that the ACRL Board establish the annual membership dues as follows, subject to subsequent approval by the ACRL membership as required under the ACRL bylaws:

• Annual dues for personal members shall be set at $45 for one year (2006) and $55 thereafter, except that the annual dues for personal members who are full-time students or retirees shall be set at $35.

Approved an increase in the ACRL Organizational Member dues to $110.00 in the next membership renewal cycle, FY06. ✺

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ies, television shows, just about anything in popular culture) that they love each week.

2. Frances Maloy. "Creativity as Leadership Strategy in Times of Change," *College & Research Libraries News* 65, no. 8 (September 2004): 444.

3. Asian American cinema resources, www.lib.washington.edu/subject/communications/bi/com495/.

4. UW Libraries Resources by Subject, www.lib.washington.edu/subject/.

5. The *Another "HYSTERIC" Librarian for Freedom* button that I purchased at the ALA Store serves as a response to Attorney General John Ashcroft's comments about librarians "hysteria" over the Patriot Act.

6. The September Project*, www.theseptemberproject.org/ ✺

• **EAGLES On Line: Expert Advisory Group on Language Engineering Standards.** *Access*: http://www.ilc.cnr.it/EAGLES96/home.html.

• **European Language Resources Association (ELRA).** *Access*: http://www.elra.info/.

• **Linguistic Society of America (LSA).** *Access*: http://www.lsadc.org/.

Discussion Lists and Reference Service

• **Ask a Linguist.** LINGUIST list also provides a reference service to users with a panel of 60 professional linguists available for any inquiries about linguistics. This service is very similar to the reference service in many libraries through "Ask a Librarian." *Access*:

http://linguistlist.org/ask-ling/index.html

• **Mailing Lists.** LINGUIST provides over 100 listservs. *Access*: http://linguistlist.org/lists/get-lists.html.

Notes

1. Jung-ran Park, 2004. "Language-related Open Archives: Impact on Scholarly Communities and Academic Librarianship," *E-JASL: The Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship* 5, no. 2–3, (2004). http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/v05n02/park_j01.htm; and Steven Bird and Gary Simons, "Seven Dimensions of Portability for Language Documentation and Description." *Language* 79, no. 3 (2003): 557–582. ✺