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Paying faculty to use library resources
Course enhancement grants at Ohio State University Libraries

At the suggestion of the assistant director for collections, instruction, and public service, the Ohio State University Libraries in fall 2005 initiated a program to provide grants to faculty members to enhance their courses with the library's electronic resources. The purpose of this program was twofold: to maximize use of electronic resources for which the library was already paying and to encourage collaboration between faculty and librarians in course development.

The libraries initially set aside $50,000 to implement the program, deciding that for each accepted proposal the faculty member would get $2,000 to teach the course and another $2,000 if the course was taught a second time. In addition, the librarian associated with the project would get $1,000. The grants were considered incentives; there was no requirement that the money to be used to implement the activities set forth in the proposals.

Implementation

The coordinator for outreach and learning was asked to implement the project and began by forming a task force of librarians that represented a diversity of academic subject areas. The librarians chosen were the subject specialists in history/philosophy/political science, French/African studies, physics/astronomy, journalism, pharmacy, and user education.

The task force's charge was to create criteria for evaluating the proposals and to evaluate and recommend proposals for funding. The criteria selected were:

• evidence of collaboration with a librarian,

• evidence that course objectives and activities were suited to inclusion of library content,

• clear course objectives,

• familiarity with or willingness to use the university course management system (CMS),

• evidence that the introduction of library resources would change or enhance the course, and

• innovative use of library resources or a variety of formats.

Once the criteria were decided upon, a request for proposals (RFP) was written and advertised to faculty via a link on the library Web site, an ad in the campus faculty/staff newspaper, and personal e-mail from library subject specialists. The deadline for the initial round of grant proposals was January 30, 2006, for courses to be taught spring 2006 (starting mid-March.)

In addition to the already stated purposes of encouraging faculty to incorporate the library's digital assets into existing courses and to foster collaboration between faculty and librarians in developing courses using the full range of resources available, the grant program had a third objective: to develop procedures and human resources to scale the program for OSU, including areas such as electronic reserves, digitizing print content on demand, copyright and rights management, integrating chat reference functionality, integrating library resources with the CMS, and

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integrating digital media content available through OhioLINK.

The RFP outlined the responsibilities of both the faculty members and librarians. The faculty member agreed to provide a course syllabus suitable for incorporating library digital assets, to review additional assets identified by the librarians for adoption into the syllabus, and to teach the course including continuous development, as needed. The librarian agreed to analyze the course syllabus and identify existing digital assets or arrange for the library to acquire new assets (as appropriate) to enhance the course and to provide chat and in-person office hours to students in the course for reference assistance. Both faculty members and librarians agreed to use the CMS as a vehicle for delivering course content.

Faculty members were required only to submit a course syllabus for application to the program, although some included a cover letter. We received 26 proposals from a wide variety of subject areas, including history, social work, medieval and Renaissance studies, education, geology, welding, mathematics, human development, physical education, music, city and regional planning, theater, English, pharmacy, and international studies.

Each member of the task force evaluated the proposals against the criteria that had been determined in our initial meetings and filled out a ratings sheet assigning a numerical value to each criterion. It is important to note that the criteria were developed for internal evaluation purposes only; we did not include them in the RFP in order not to limit the kinds of proposals we would get.

Each member's total score for each proposal was sent to the task force chairperson who combined them in a single spreadsheet and sorted them in rank order. The task force then met to discuss the proposals and chose eight to recommend to the director of libraries for funding.

Once the spring quarter had begun, the grant money was added to the paychecks of the faculty members and librarians as taxable income. In the case of more than one faculty member teaching the course or more than one librarian attached to the course, the grant was split between them.

Outcomes and evaluation

The eight proposals selected were in the areas of city and regional planning, medieval and Renaissance studies, theater, education, geology, mathematics, pharmacy, and social work. Each course varied in its use of library resources. For example, the city planning course made use of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and LANDSAT 7 Satellite Images databases, as well as digitized zoning maps and videos from the OhioLINK Digital Media Center. The students also took photographs, recorded interviews, and created thorough planning reports that are archived in the university's institutional repository. The course on 19th-century theater digitized playbills, costume and scenic design drawings, letters, and pamphlets from the noncirculating theater research collection and made them available within the CMS, as well as provided links to various databases, such as American Periodical Series, 1740–1900 and Early American Newspapers.

Before the quarter ended, the task force met to develop evaluation surveys for the program. Faculty and librarians received separate e-mail questionnaires, and the faculty members were asked to use the CMS to allow students to answer a survey. Some of the librarians in the project were asked to demonstrate the changes to the courses at a meeting of the public services staff of the library at the end of the quarter.

We received evaluations from six librarians, four faculty members, and aggregated student survey results from only two of the courses. Generally, the evaluations were positive. The librarians reported taking a significant amount of time to prepare for the courses (from 24 to 40 hours before the course began) and having a sharp learning curve regarding the CMS. Most librarians had not been exposed to the CMS previously and, in some cases, neither had the faculty member with whom they were partnered. However, they all reported that the project was worthwhile for the contact with

the faculty and interaction with the students. Most suggested the need for more assistance with the clerical work of adding links to library materials into the CMS.

Faculty members were similarly enthusiastic about the collaborations and librarian assistance and reported learning about resources and access of which they were previously unaware. Some expressed a preference for receiving the money in a research account rather than as taxable income.

As the initial round of grants was deemed a success, the library administration decided to continue offering the program. The task force met in the fall of 2006 to discuss the evaluations, recommend changes to the RFP, and open a competition for courses in the winter and spring of 2007. This was done to give as much time as possible for the preparation of proposals and time for the selected teams to work on the courses before the start of classes.

The task force did recommend several changes to the process that were implemented. The application process asked for a cover letter in addition to the syllabus that would outline the proposed enhancements to the course, and the applicants were asked to show evidence of prior discussion with a librarian. The RFP directed them to a list of subject specialists.

We were concerned that the program appealed mainly to upper-division courses that had fewer students, although it was noted that these were also the courses most likely to make use of a variety of library resources. The task force looked for ways to encourage lower-division courses to participate, but decided not to express a preference for these in the RFP. Grant winners are now offered the option of receiving the money in their paychecks or research accounts, and the offer of another $2,000 for teaching the course a second time was dropped.

Some changes were made to the library organization as a result of the grant program. Responsibility for electronic reserves was moved to the Serials, Electronic Resources, and Rights Management department under technical services in order to promote a more

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efficient process of accepting requests, digitizing material, obtaining copyright clearance, and making the material available. Electronic reserves staff now have the ability to add electronic reserve links directly into the CMS, alleviating the burden of adding links for the librarians involved in the grant program.

After three complete cycles of grants, an enlarged task force met in the summer of 2007 to review the entire program. For the first time, two members from outside the libraries were included: a representative from the faculty and teaching assistant development program and one from the Technology Enhanced Learning and Research program. The Law and Health Sciences libraries have also agreed to promote the course enhancement grants to its constituents.

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Conclusion

We have been very pleased with the reception and outcomes of the course enhancement grant program and are considering ways in which we might use grants to further other library objectives, such as encouraging faculty to partner with librarians in service-learning courses and outreach activities. Although some librarians were initially startled by the idea of "bribing" the faculty to use the library, others have come to view the grant program as a valuable incentive for bringing together faculty and librarians and maximizing the use of our resources. ✈