Implications for Librarians Working with Teaching Faculty

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Themes from the Data

1. Faculty interactions with library and librarians
2. Relationship of assignment structure to library research
3. Students' help seeking
4. Obstacles to successful research

1. Faculty Interactions with Library and Librarians

- Faculty feel good about people who work in library
- Most do not understand the range of resources/services available
- Some resources/services seem fragmented—online catalog, I-Share, ILLiad, etc.
- Collections
  - Overall, satisfied with collection for institution this size (IWU); think the collection is satisfactory for undergraduates (DePaul)
  - Some are aware of their role in requesting materials
- Some expressed a desire to work more closely with librarians, but felt time was an issue

No Expectations for the Library

- "… when I came here I had no expectations. I didn't know what to expect and I was pleasantly surprised that my library liaison could help to teach my class and give my students her expertise and be available to help them. My sense is that I could probably tap into those resources much better and I'm even someone who uses the librarian for multiple courses on a [semester] basis. So as a whole, I would guess that most faculty don't expect as much as they could." (IWU faculty)

Team Teaching

- "Well I like the way we [faculty and librarian] teach my class. I'm always present when she's presenting so that I could say, 'by the way, I want you to have this many references for this paper or by the way you should read this many abstracts,' because she doesn't necessarily know in the content area or she might not even know what key words to suggest. . . . I think the intellectual property issue would be a big area where I could learn from the librarians and I've been seeing plagiarism cropping up more and more." (IWU faculty)

2. Relationship of Assignment Structure to Library Research

- Difficult to keep up with changing resources/technology
- Disconnect between faculty and librarian about expectations for students
- Student interpretation of instructions:
  - Don't use the Web
  - Work independently

Structuring Assignments

- "In my classes I give them very explicit instructions about what to do. [laughs] And when I didn't give them instructions they floundered and they would either just be able to do it because they'd had previous teachers or just had the wherewithal to manage it on their own or they might plagiarize or they wouldn't do a very good job at all. And so my solution to that has been to create highly structured assignments that usually involve library instruction. I still think they flounder. [laughs] Even given all those supports I know they flounder." (DPU faculty)

Disconnect between Faculty and Librarians on Assignments

- "Sometimes the faculty member will give an assignment. You're not in class so it's really impossible to know what happens. I would love to…sometimes especially with the ones that seem…like later you realize how confused they were. You think, I would love to have been in class and hear what your professor said, and then you come in and told me what you think you need." (DPU librarian)

3. Students' Help Seeking

- Strategic, active
- Peers and profs, not librarians
- Lack of awareness of what librarians can do, other than to find books
- DPU & IWU students preferred in-person help
- DPU faculty think students are afraid

Lack of Student Awareness

- " … students are even less aware of how the librarians can help them than I am. I find that most of them seem to have not worked much with librarians and may even find it a new suggestion when I suggest that they work with a librarian." (DPU faculty)

Lack of Student Awareness

- "I never really thought that [librarians] would know much about what I'm doing specifically since. . . the librarians [are] specializing in everything, but I just figured that the professor would know more about the topic than they would. I didn't think it would be that helpful." (IWU student)

- ". . . I've never had a question in researching that I feel like I would ask a librarian. I would probably want to ask my teacher specifically. 'Cause they're questions like 'Is this the right thing to research?' or, 'Would this have anything to do with my topic?' and not so much, 'How do I do this, where do I go?' I'm not sure that I would get an answer out of the librarian for my question." (IWU student)

Students' Fear of the Library

- *Would you like to say anything more about what you think the librarian's role is in ensuring students' success?* "Helping to remove the fear and put in the fun of the research process ... librarians are usually very enthusiastic about what you can do in the library and the types of resources available. ... It doesn't have to be an intimidating process to use the databases and to maybe learn some of the short cuts." (DPU faculty)

Student Effort

- *"What do you think students expect of librarians?* To do it for them. . . . And librarians should feel quite comfortable telling them no. And, in fact, I think that the only thing that I see as a risk to the burgeoning forms of communications with a librarians is that students will become lazier about taking responsibility for their own work ..." (DPU faculty)

- "I just didn't want to go to the library. And, uh, I don't know... I just thought, it's a lot of work, in my mind, it just felt like it was a lot of work, like having to go to the library, look through all the aisles, find the books... I know that's not even the hard part, it's just the fact that I know that I've got to read the books. . . . I'm not even going to bother, so it was just like why am I even going to go over there if I'm not even really reading ..." (DPU student)

4. Obstacles to Successful Research

- Choosing a topic
- Where to begin (other than Google)
- Locating books in the stacks
- Lacking conceptual framework:
  - Assuming topic is obscure or library is lacking material
  - Becoming overwhelmed in a broad topic
- Overconfidence in search skills
- Giving up easily and switching topics

Choosing a Topic

- "Probably finding a topic. Cause I'm always afraid that doesn't have enough literature…that I won't find enough sources for or that it's going to be too complex for me and I will find sources, but I won't be able to understand them and then I won't be able to write a thesis because I don't know what they are talking about. So that's always my fear like I'll pick a topic and I'll be working on it and several weeks go by and that's when I realize it's too hard and I won't as much time to write the paper and change the topic." (IWU student)

Lacking Conceptual Framework

- " … originally I had a different topic. I was thinking about something that had to do [with] the discrimination of Jews in 16th century London, and I realized that *finding information on that would be almost impossible.* 'Cause I'm interested in the really obscure topics that you would be like, 'that's really interesting.' But no one really has done anything on that, so it's really hard to find." (IWU student)

Student Overconfidence

- "No, they [students] think they're smarter than they are.   So, when you try to teach them something they think they know it before you've actually taught it and then when they actually perform, they perform badly because they don't know it … " (DPU faculty)

Being Overwhelmed/Staying Focused

- "How to use it and how not to let it distract you . . . how to keep you under control. Not sit there on an information binge for an hour. Be able to say 'okay, I've used it; I actually need to read these sources now.' I actually didn't feel like I got that feeling in our information sessions, it was a little bit more like we need to be researching. And literally I would come in here and literally for hours be researching. I finally realized, whoa, I need to just read some of these things. Because I had this much paper printed out (spreads fingers to about 1") and like 15 books, seriously. And I needed to slow down on the research." (IWU student)

Choosing Search Terms

- "It's really hard to just search, because you can be searching and searching and then often times you can try different keywords and it will bring this wealth of information that you easily be overlooking if you didn't do an exhaustive search which is what we always heard. But how are you suppose to know what's out there. So I think getting the right research or finding the right information and finding what you actually wanted to talk about. Because sometimes you wouldn't find anything on what you were supposed to talk about or you couldn't find anything on what you wanted to talk about. So the information is there and the system is there but I think, as students, it's hard to pull it out because there's [so?] much out there." (IWU student)

Choosing Search Terms

- "Key words that I used that were too ambiguous and I wasn't sure how to clarify them so then I had to do more research to pick one exactly what I needed. Sometimes the hypothesis that I would have, were too strange that if I wasn't a master or someone who had really focused on that specific study, I wouldn't know how to answer without tons and tons of research. And with the limited time that they give you within a semester, it's really not enough time to write a decent research paper that I could use for preparation for masters. And that's a different subject that I get irritated with school because I don't feel like we are prepared enough. 'Cause I'm in senior sem now and we are just learning to synthesis research papers for Spanish. Now we're learning." (IWU student)