

Analysis

New Roles for Libraries

Colleen Boff and Catherine Cardwell

Libraries

Earlham College

University of Florida (UF)

University of Maryland (UMD)

West Virginia University (WVU)

Introduction

The institutions in this category include Earlham, a small private liberal arts college located in the Midwest, and three large, research-intensive public universities located in Florida, Maryland, and West Virginia. Some aspect of library instruction is common among these stories, yet the intended audiences for these new initiatives differ considerably. Earlham's Library Immersion Fellows Team (LIFT) is designed specifically for first-generation, first-year students. Veterans are at the forefront of the new program at WVU, while graduate students are the focus at UF. Liaison librarians are the primary audience for the change at UMD with a re-visioning of the liaison librarian program. The initiatives at Earlham, UF, and UMD rely heavily upon partnerships with offices, units, or departments outside of the libraries. Regardless of institutional size at Earlham, UF, and WVU, the programs implemented at these institutions involve a segment of the overall student population.

I. Warm-up Phase

STAGE 1: ESTABLISHING A SENSE OF URGENCY

Librarians at Earlham and at WVU started their new programs after top leadership issued a challenge to create new initiatives for underserved populations. The act of presenting a program idea as a possible solution to an administrator's challenge creates its own sense of urgency. The impetus to develop the LIFT program at Earlham came in response to a senior administrator's campus-wide challenge for assistance with solving the retention problem they had with first-generation students at Earlham, a problem shared by many institutions nationwide. In addition to being the only one to respond to this challenge, the library instruction program at Earlham had a long and rich history of innovation thanks to highly effective instruction program leadership. Both of these

factors fueled the urgency with which it approached the implementation of this new program.

Similarly, the pressure to respond to a challenge from the new library dean along with the pressure that comes with being a principal investigator on a federal grant, as was the case at WVU, is ample cause for motivation to succeed. The director of strategy and planning at WVU started this new initiative by partnering with the office of veterans affairs to dedicate a space in the library for veterans to study and seek tutoring. Recognizing the need for more, she subsequently applied for and received an IMLS grant to expand this program.

The programs initiated at UF and UMD evolved from looking inward at library practices. Primed by a goal to create transformative collaborations identified through their strategic planning process, the librarians at UF wanted to address library staff concerns about the administration of graduate internships in the library. They recognized that the timing was right to act on this goal with newly hired talent in place at the library and conversations among the arts and humanities faculty about the need to create internships for their students in order to provide career exploration and CV-worthy experience. The librarians at UMD were similarly engaged with a conversation taking place in the professional literature about the changing landscape of librarian liaison programs. They saw the need to reinvent their liaison program to respond to the changing needs of scholars on their campus. In both instances, these new initiatives were the result of librarians taking a step back from the day-to-day tasks of running libraries to respond to the conversations taking place around them.

STAGE 2: CREATING A GUIDING COALITION

The guiding coalitions at UF and WVU include a few people from the library who championed the initiative and formed partnerships outside of the library to bring the initiatives to fruition. The director of strategy and planning was initially the only person from the library involved with the implementation of the veterans program at WVU. She collaborated extensively with a wide range of staff outside the library, however. An associate dean and the digital scholarship librarian within the library at UF partnered to work on the creation of an internship program proposal, but they also sought external partners when they solicited input from a faculty member who served as the graduate coordinator for the history department.

With more involvement among library employees, the library dean and the senior administrator who made the initial call for help cochaired and identified the team at Earlham. They selected liaison librarians as members because of their long-standing tradition of involvement with campus governance, advising, and teaching semester-long courses. The involvement of two senior-level administrators on this team meant that the team had a wider reach on campus and that it was better situated to spread the word about the program, to raise financial support, and to reach alumni. The guiding coalition at UMD was more complex and consisted of two task forces formed by the associate dean of public services. The liaison task force had four members and was charged with making recommendations for how to improve services to faculty and students. The research commons task force actively sought feedback from stakeholders through interviews and surveys to determine needs.

STAGE 3: DEVELOPING A VISION AND STRATEGY

One or two librarians initiated and articulated the vision for each of these new initiatives, but their strategy evolved to include others. The cochairs' vision for their project at Earlham was to divide the initial cohort of fifteen to thirty students into four small groups with a staff member assigned to each group. The teaching team worked on a shared curriculum where students came together for a ninety-minute meeting each week to discuss readings, to build information literacy competencies, but most importantly, to build relationships with each other. The leading partners at UF presented their internship plan to the library management and leadership stakeholders to get buy-in, which resulted in the formation of the internship program committee that ultimately included some of the key library stakeholders. The goals of the committee were to promote and explain the program to others. The vision for the two task forces at UMD was broad and interconnected. The liaison group was charged with the development of a framework for the liaison program that included core competencies for liaison librarians, methods to assess those competencies, and the professional development needed to be successful in their new roles. The research commons task force was charged with the design of a one-stop shop for researchers to access all services related to the research process. At WVU, the director of strategy and planning lobbied, as part of her vision, for dedicated library funds and a dedicated library staff position to work with the veteran population.

STAGE 4: COMMUNICATING THE CHANGE VISION

Communication efforts at Earlham and WVU were outwardly focused with the intention of reaching the audiences for whom their programs were intended. The teaching team at Earlham used a wide range of outlets to recruit interest in the LIFT program. They started with an annual presentation at a faculty retreat, promotion of their program through the admissions office, and a promotional piece in their alumni magazine. The latter blossomed into a significant donation that enabled them to expand the program offerings with funds to support an off-campus learning experience for LIFT students. Likewise, the director of strategy and planning at WVU spent her time putting the structures in place to recruit veterans to library services and offerings. She did this by recruiting and hiring veterans to help her get the word out through social media and other outlets.

Communication at UF and UMD started among library employees. The committee members at UF spent an academic year developing a website, creating program materials, and working with library staff to promote the benefits of their internship program for graduate students. The two task forces at UMD completed their charges and shared their written reports with library administration and with library staff through open forums. Their library administration, in turn, shared the written reports with campus administrators and with leadership teams in other colleges on their campus as a way to seek feedback. It was a means to remind their campus colleagues of how the library supports research activity on campus.

II. Introducing New Practices Phase

STAGE 5: EMPOWERING BROAD-BASED ACTION

The chapter authors describe barriers they faced in refining the programs at Earlham and WVU. The teaching team at Earlham had the difficult task of developing selection

criteria and methods for the travel opportunity due to limited funds. The teaching team also had to contend with keeping students grounded in the curriculum with the distractions created by the travel opportunity. The director of strategic planning at WVU had the frustration of requesting an extension for a grant deliverable when an office she relied upon to produce a promotional video delayed progress. She also had to figure out how to sustain outreach efforts initially afforded by a seed grant. She did so by working with a team of librarians from their embedded librarian program.

The barriers associated with undertaking a new librarian liaison model at UMD were more complicated than the barriers encountered at Earlham or WVU because the change initiative involved many more library staff and the change was personal. In order to move forward with the project and with internal communication efforts, the UMD libraries began with a reorganization to put all subject librarians in one department. In addition to fostering regular communication among middle management, the libraries held monthly forums where all subject librarians could exchange ideas. Most importantly, the libraries provided professional development training and incorporated into their annual review process assessment measures and goal setting for liaison librarians. Unlike the other institutions in this category, the internship program committee at UF felt that they had few barriers to contend with thanks to the many existing relationships the library had with academic departments. While they still had a great deal of work to do to create an actual program, they had a solid foundation on which to build.

STAGE 6: GENERATING SHORT-TERM WINS

Short-term wins at Earlham, UF, and WVU demonstrated continued growth with their projects intended for their respective populations. The teaching team at Earlham integrated a digital storytelling project into their shared curriculum, which led to more funding when one of the librarian instructors showed her students' videos at an alumni event. They worked with the alumni office to set up a mentor program between alumni and LIFT students. The veterans' project at WVU received additional funds from the library administration to build upon the work completed as a result of securing an IMLS grant. Combined, these funds enabled the director of strategy and planning to continue shaping programming, collections, and services for veterans. Short-term wins at UF came with the launch of two internships in the summer of 2016. This enabled the internship program committee to operationalize their planning with their first orientation event. Short-term wins were realized at UMD over a longer period of time because the UMD libraries were changing existing behaviors rather than starting a new program. The liaison framework was phased in over two years and was done through the creation of an annual assessment system. The liaison librarians were expected to demonstrate accomplishments in five categories of liaison activities. Credit for gains in the research commons side of the change initiative was attributed to a dynamic individual who stepped up to lead. Under this umbrella, a one-stop shop website was created along with online librarian profiles. Adjustments were also made to librarians' day-to-day work expectations to make room for the new services offered under the RC, and library spaces were modernized to reflect new active learning teaching methods.

STAGE 7: CONSOLIDATING GAINS AND PRODUCING MORE CHANGE

Regular planning meetings among the teaching team at Earlham before the term, in the middle of the term, and after the term kept the LIFT curriculum grounded and moving forward. Momentum continued at WVU with the help of the engagement librarians, who conceived of continued outreach and programming solutions for veterans now that they had dedicated spaces for this population in their library system. In addition to an orientation experience, the internship program committee at UF launched even more experiences for their interns, such as a required end-of-experience presentation and a résumé-building workshop. The committee streamlined the proposal submission process, posted a calendar of deadlines for applicants, and offered training for librarian internship directors.

Finally, the small seeds of change to the librarian liaison model and research commons at UMD blossomed into a complete culture change. Most of the librarian liaisons became embedded in their departments, while specialized RCs emerged in various libraries around campus. The synergy of these two efforts has aligned to the degree that faculty and students now look to the libraries as a place for all aspects of research assistance.

III. Grounding Phase

STAGE 8: ANCHORING NEW APPROACHES IN THE CULTURE

Each of these programs has been underway for a few years now. Earlham has only grown stronger through the creation of intentional intersections between upper-class students and first-semester students affiliated with the program. The upper-class students serve as role models to first-year students while students across cohorts come together to celebrate those who graduate. UF's internship program committee applied for an NEH grant to strengthen collaborations as a means to improve job placement for graduate students. Though they were not recipients of the award, the work that the librarians put into writing the grant proposal raised the visibility of their work with the president, who provided funding for them to address some changes needed for graduate students enrolled in humanities PhD programs. At WVU, structural changes have been suggested to anchor the work with veterans into the libraries' organization, including a reporting line to the library administrative office and the creation of an advisory board. The changes at UMD, which included the shift to a new librarian liaison framework and a research commons, are well anchored and now a part of the culture. The authors attribute this shift to a gradual implementation process and the creation of a learning culture among library employees.

Analysis and Conclusions

Momentum continued at Earlham, where the libraries have been awarded more funding from the board of trustees to continue increasing the retention rate for first-generation students. Reflecting on the use of the Kotter framework as an analytical tool, the authors at Earlham found value in taking particular care at the warm-up phase, especially when

working on a project that is not the exclusive domain of the library. They stress the importance of the warm-up phase, which helped them take stock of the political dynamics on their campus when stepping up to take on a new and unusual role. The library at WVU entered new territory as well with taking the lead on campus to provide services to veterans, an idea met with some skepticism. UF attributed its record of awarding twenty-nine internships over forty-four semesters and taking the lead to transform graduate education to the existing relationships the librarians had with faculty from the outset. These relationships were invaluable throughout the program development as it gained credibility. Though there was a degree of cultural change within the library in each of these stories, the cultural change was most widespread with the transformation of the librarian liaison program at UMD because of the number of librarians it impacted.

TIPS FOR NEW ROLES FOR LIBRARIES

- New projects require seed money, but actively seeking long-term financial sustainability during the change process is also important. The work at Earlham and WVU shows that this can be done by showcasing small wins to the right stakeholders at the right time.
- In most of these new initiatives, the guiding coalition used early successes to fuel program growth incrementally. Typically, the new initiatives started out small with only a partially formed vision, but through an iterative cycle of evaluation and assessment, the initiatives were scaffolded into a more robust program.
- A prevalent theme throughout the stories in this category is the importance of the guiding coalition remaining agile, responsive, and flexible throughout the change process. Having a rigid strategy in place may result in missed opportunities to collaborate with new campus partners.
- Libraries have opportunities to step in and solve campus problems even when the problem does not fall within the traditional scope of the library. Librarians at Earlham solved the retention problem with first-generation students. Librarians at UF changed the educational experience of graduate students through their internship program. The library at UMD is now the go-to place for all aspects of research through its research commons. WVU is setting an example in the field for how the library can serve veterans. Libraries need to take care when they embark on solving these larger campus problems. Not only do they need to gain trust and credibility among their campus counterparts, but they also need to make sure they consider the political ramifications of boundaries and territories. They can address this issue by building the right relationships.
- At least with the stories in this category, a few leaders who will be continuous champions of the vision can best nurture new roles for libraries. Communicating the vision and mission within the library may be of less importance than identifying key library stakeholders and keeping them informed along the way. Critical to all of these stories was connecting with stakeholders outside of the library and building relationships. Keeping library administration involved helped with financial sustainability in addition to furthering the reach of the program initiatives in administrative venues outside the library.