

Opportunities for Teaching: Library-Teaching Center Partnerships

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In recent years, librarians have been extending the reference education experience of students by integrating information literacy into the curriculum and incorporating active learning into their teaching sessions. Through these efforts, librarians have developed more participatory teaching roles that require closer collaboration with and greater outreach to faculty. The librarian's approach to faculty is changing from “Let me help you” to “Let’s talk about your teaching” and discussing faculty efforts to develop students’ information literacy skills. Partnering with campus teaching centers can be very effective in developing collaborations and partnerships with teaching faculty and in raising faculty awareness of librarians’ teaching interests and efforts in addition to library information literacy programs.

Common Goals

Dartmouth College Library and the new teaching center, DCAL, the Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning, have been working together in these ways since 2005 when the Center opened. DCAL has a planning team consisting of the director and associate director, the executive director of the Writing Program, a librarian, an instructional technologist, and most recently, a faculty member from the Medical School. The mission and the goals of the Center are to advance undergraduate and graduate learning by providing and coordinating services that promote and support effective teaching. The library can have a role in each of the goals, and, aren't these goals related to library goals?

- Building a community of informed conversation about learning and teaching practices.
 - DCAL promotes collaboration and discussion between faculty members and support services for teaching at Dartmouth.
 - DCAL collects, selects and distills published scholarship on teaching and learning and makes it available to Dartmouth faculty.
- Orienting new faculty members and teaching assistants to teaching at Dartmouth.
- Promoting the purposeful use of new media and information technology for teaching and learning at Dartmouth.
- Helping faculty members, individually and in peer groups, assess the effectiveness of their teaching in order to promote continuous improvement.
- Drawing special attention to matters of diversity, focusing on the benefits, challenges, opportunities, and obligations such matters present in a residential learning community.

Other campus services, such as Academic Computing, also have elements of these goals in their missions.

Power of Place

A campus teaching center provides a place where people can come together to talk about teaching and learning. The Director of DCAL, Thomas Luxon, identifies the Center's priority as getting people around the table talking about teaching. "DCAL is another forum for faculty, librarians, and instructional technologists to collaborate with an intentional focus on teaching." Faculty, librarians, and instructional technologists discuss principles of teaching, issues of information literacy for the next generation, and the use of technology in teaching. People from these constituent groups attend webcasts or on-campus sessions given by invited speakers. In February 2007, Dartmouth invited Ken Bain, author of *What the Best College Teachers Do* to spend a day working with interested community members. In July 2006, Joan K. Lippincott of the Coalition for Networked Information gave a campus presentation and led discussions on "Pedagogy, Technology Applications, and Learning Spaces for Net Gen Students." Luxon articulates when people from different divisions and departments volunteer their time for professional development, individuals' efforts are "more sincere" because they are voluntary and stem from a true interest in effecting better teaching and learning. The teaching center supplies the place and organizational support to make things happen that people wanted to happen anyway.

What does it mean for librarians to be involved in teaching center activities?

Librarians listen to faculty talk about teaching – this is an opportunity to understand what faculty perceive as their goals and challenges. Librarians gain a clearer idea of what it is like to teach semester-long courses. How do faculty set learning outcomes? How do they craft learning modules to be used during class time, or online outside of class? How do

they assess their students' learning? Librarians are also exposed to research about teaching and learning through the education literature which provides a broader perspective and supplements the library education literature. Librarian participation in teaching center activities is also an opportunity to make faculty aware of librarians' interest in teaching and their expertise in teaching students to find and evaluate information, the set of information literacy skills identified by the Association of College and Research Libraries. Many librarians have expertise in designing research assignments that they use during the traditional fifty- or ninety-minute library session in courses. Teaching centers offer the opportunity to create closer teaching collaboration and integrate the research process throughout the course rather than confine it to a fifty-minute session. Discussing the possibilities and limitations of these short sessions with faculty can make them aware of the benefits of working together on classes.

Collaboration in Teaching

In our liaison responsibilities to faculty, librarians have used different approaches to pique faculty interest in working with librarians. With a better understanding of good teaching principles and the semester-long teaching faculty experience, librarians are moving from “Hello! I can help you!” to “Let’s talk about your teaching.” As a colleague, a librarian can talk with a faculty member about her teaching and then discuss ways in which the librarian can contribute to or support those efforts. Thomas Luxon recently consulted with English Language and Literature Librarian Laura Braunstein on his upcoming senior seminar class on Milton. Together, they articulated learning goals, developed possible assignments and exercises, and brainstormed assessment methods.

This type of collaboration truly integrates information literacy into the curriculum and expands the librarian's role in a course.

Opportunity to Showcase Collaborations

Teaching centers create opportunities to showcase faculty-librarian collaborations. DCAL sponsors a luncheon workshop series entitled Teaching Students Research. These sessions are organized by the librarian on the DCAL team with the help of the other team members and other Dartmouth librarians. Over lunch, faculty and librarians who collaborate share the teaching practices they use to have students develop valuable research skills in the various disciplines. During the past two years, faculty members from the following departments have presented: the Biological Sciences, Earth Sciences, Engineering, English, Environmental Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies.

Through teaching centers, librarians can offer workshops and individual consultation services to faculty on the development and assessment of student information literacy skills. Workshops librarians have designed or presented include:

- The Blackboard Connection: Students and the Library
- Designing Research Assignments (Writing Program-DCAL)
- Graduate Student Teacher Training
- Plagiarism (Writing Program-DCAL)
- Teaching with Data Sets
- TWIT: Teaching with Technology (Academic Computing-DCAL)
- Teaching Students Research

In a professional development workshop series, Graduate Student Teacher Training, sponsored by DCAL and the Graduate Student Office, librarian Pamela Bagley discussed her work with a Biological Sciences professor on linking the professor's teaching objectives to a research assignment. Pamela and the Associate Director of DCAL, Vicki May, had coordinated Pamela's presentation during the session in which Vicki taught the graduate students about "backward design." During her presentation to the graduate students, Pamela used active learning and dovetailed her presentation with Vicki's slide on the method of backward design. Pamela presented a problem concerning matching teaching objectives to a research assignment and gave the students some necessary background information. Then Pamela stopped and asked them to think for a few minutes and share how they would design the assignment. The graduate students offered suggestions and Pamela showed them what she and the faculty member did to revamp the assignment. The librarian modeled principles of active learning in her presentation, and her use of this technique was not lost on the graduate students! Pamela's session gave the novice teachers an awareness of librarians as teaching colleagues.

Other Teaching Center-Library Involvement

In its mission to bring people around the table to talk about teaching, DCAL actively seeks and creates collaborative opportunities for professional development. As a result, DCAL has encouraged librarians and other teaching support staff to participate in these programs.

Before the teaching center was founded, the Library and the Writing Program had been working together to give first-year students experience doing research in the library and via the library web site. With the Writing Program and DCAL, the Library now co-sponsors an overnight retreat for faculty teaching first-year seminars. Part of the retreat includes a session in which participants discuss teaching strategies for developing the information literacy skills of first-year students. Librarians showcase effective teaching modules and assignments. Through exposure in this and other DCAL events, an annotated bibliography assignment in which a student evaluates the academic quality of each resource and articulates how it will support her thesis, has been taken modified by faculty in different disciplines to meet the criteria in their areas. Librarians guide the discussion in which faculty members discuss the scalability of the assignments and teaching modules and how they can be applied to different disciplines.

DCAL has asked librarians to participate in other center events in order to represent the library and to make connections between faculty and librarians. For example, a librarian is on the planning team for a two-day summer institute for faculty sponsored by DCAL and Academic Computing on active learning. Another librarian attends the Teaching Science Seminar sponsored by the Office of the Dean of Faculty, the Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity, and DCAL. The seminar series is designed to increase faculty awareness of research related to teaching students in the sciences, math, and engineering and to explore strategies to improve the retention and diversity of students.

Through the DCAL Fellowship offered to faculty to re-think and re-design their courses and teaching methods, where applicable, a librarian and an instructional

technologist will be part of the team supporting the faculty member's fellowship work. A 2007-2008 fellowship awardee, Ivy Schweitzer, will work with college archivist Peter Carini and web designer Sarah Horton to build a website that will make hundreds of pages of manuscript materials written by and about Samson Occom (1723 – 1792), the first Native American writer, easily available to students and researchers.

Faculty Feedback

DCAL surveys attendees after each session and asks what they found most and least helpful. Participant responses regarding the most helpful aspects of the sessions designed by librarians or in which librarians presented are:

- Hear people talk about different teaching methods
- Learn about specific assignments
- Good forum for discussion
- Discovering the many ways that librarians can be involved in a specific class.
- Seeing how willing librarians are to help with providing actual hands-on support to our classes. It is terrific to have this.
- I've already met with a librarian to talk about having her involved in my annotated bibliography assignment through Blackboard.
- Dialogue between faculty, librarians, computing staff
- Contact and discussion with librarians who are committed to teaching and to collaboration with faculty.
- I liked the discussion about the disconnect between the students and teachers about the reference search strategy.
- The discussion of research "from the student's point of view."

Outcomes

The exposure of librarians through DCAL venues has increased librarian participation in campus conversations about teaching and created new opportunities for librarian involvement in courses. As a result of this partnership with the teaching center, faculty are aware that librarians are interested in their teaching and are willing to work with them in new ways to support their teaching and their students' learning. This partnership has transformed the librarian's role to become a teaching partner in the classroom.

Librarian participation in teaching centers provides greater visibility for librarians on campus and a venue to bring information literacy and other library-related issues to the table for a wider campus discussion. As Vicki May recently observed, through these discussions, the participants are learning to speak the same language. Information literacy is now part of that language. The greater visibility of the work librarians do and faculty understanding of information literacy – and other literacies – create a supportive environment in which faculty, librarians, and other staff can programmatically develop student research skills throughout their undergraduate and graduate education.

Let's talk about teaching.

Selected Resources

ACRL: Association of College and Research Libraries

Information Literacy
<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm>

Immersion Program
<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/acrlinfolit/professactivity/iil/immersion/immersionprograms.htm>

Bain, Ken. *What the Best College Teachers Do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning. <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~dcal/>

Ives, Sallie and Karin Steinbrenner. "Bridging the Divide: Combining Faculty Centers and Instructional Technology Support." EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research, *Research Bulletin*. April 26, 2005.
<http://www.educause.edu/LibraryDetailPage/666?ID=ERB0509>

Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education: POD Network
<http://www.podnetwork.org/>