

# Quality of Student Research Enriched by Librarian/Faculty Cooperation

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A classic goal of a university education is to prepare each student for a lifetime of self-directed learning—a lifetime of problem solving. To help achieve this goal, a professor can and should make library research an essential part of a course which he or she teaches; classroom discussion should include data researched by each student, and examinations during and at the end of the term should test for the comprehension of these data.

Library research is more meaningful and effective if it is correlated with course work and is co-taught by a professor and a librarian. The professor has the central responsibility in this endeavor, but the librarian can help carry out this responsibility and enrich it. The librarian knows of reference works that have changed or have been superseded by newer, more useful ones; and, more important, the librarian knows how students use and misuse these sources. Bibliographical skills become real to the student when a librarian demonstrates reference sources that are pertinent examples of a specific course-related assignment. When reinforced by the professor, such student efforts can result in a definite expansion of the classroom experience.

## The Philosophical Basis

Research has shown that cooperation between teachers and librarians is essential to effective library instruction regardless of its plan or form. Only through this cooperation can librarians and/or teachers be assured of meeting students needs. Joyner Library reference librarians at East Carolina University assist in developing search strategies and often interpret assignments. The student who does not ask questions in class will bring his or her assignment sheet to the library, hand it to a reference librarian and ask, "What does my teacher mean for me to do in the library?" Without any consultation between the faculty member and the librarian, the librarian can only interpret the assignment from the librarian's viewpoint, which may not correspond with that of the teacher making the assignment. This leaves the student caught in the middle.

Since faculty and academic librarians have the same goals for educating students, we are partners, not competitors. It takes active cooperation on the part of both to do an adequate job. Even though a teacher may be able to offer students some bibliographic instruction, he/she cannot be expected to keep in-

formed of available resources as thoroughly as the librarian can. Librarians are consultants, tutors and instructors. By lecturing to classes, preparing bibliographies and working with individuals, we make a contribution to the teaching program.

Working with faculty members in library assignments, librarians become aware of materials which should be acquired to support the curriculum. Though the level of subject expertise of a librarian rarely matches that of a professor, knowledge of bibliographic skills can help to bridge the gap.

In his book, *Understanding Scientific Literatures*,<sup>1</sup> Joseph Donohue writes that the contribution of the librarian lies in the competent management of human records. This implies a deep understanding of the record, of the user's need for the record, and of the communication processes by which the user makes effective contact with it. There are two levels of operation in dealing with records: (1) the subject level, which pertains to ideas and concepts of the subject field, and (2) the metalevel, which pertains to the physical format, the language and the bibliographic apparatus of that field's records. Mr. Donohue feels that the librarian, in acquiring and organizing subject literatures, is guided by whatever knowledge he or she has at both the subject level and the metalevel; but his or her unique contribution as a librarian comes from his or her knowledge of the metalevel, which is concerned with the ideas it contains.

Verna Beardsley states that today there is unanimous recognition of the fact that library instruction is effective only at the time of need.<sup>2</sup> The reference librarians in Joyner Library agree. Library instruction is of more interest to the student if it is planned as a basic part of the philosophy of a course. Bibliographic skills become real to the student when the librarian and faculty member work together planning specific course-related assignments.

I agree with Evan Farber in his contention that one of the major benefits of giving bibliographic instruction to classes is the rapport established with students who come to realize that librarians are approachable, knowledgeable and interested in the students' library problems.<sup>3</sup> Because of this rapport, it is easier to respond to a reference question with library instruction and to show how looking for the particular information requested fits into a pattern of search strategy. The reference interview, then, is viewed as a potential educational experience and an important part of library instruction.

## **An Example: The Physical Education Graduate Research Course**

Most of us assume that people majoring in physical education only learn how to play and are not really serious about research or indepth study. However, at East Carolina University I have found that assumption to be false. For years, students in the Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Safety Department, as well as students in other departments across campus, were sent by their professors to the library to do research. Neither formal nor informal instruction in the skills of research was given by a librarian. Students worked independently, asking questions when absolutely necessary. However, about ten years ago the need of the students to know more than they were learning by this method was recognized, and a librarian was invited to present to the Physical

Education graduate research class a single lecture on reference tools relevant for research in this area. That was the beginning of a progression of library teaching efforts which has highly satisfactory to students, faculty, and librarians alike.

## Background

The textbook used by the students in this initial class contained a chapter on library research materials. Because the chapter contained many errors and listed some things which Joyner Library did not own, the students became quite frustrated in trying to identify and locate materials. The instructor, Dr. Ray Martinez, invited the head of the Reference Department to discuss this chapter with the students. Mrs. Elizabeth Williams explained the types of information that could be found in books listed in the chapter, their availability in Joyner Library, the most valuable indexes to use, and some things which were peculiar to Joyner Library. This was really a lecture in a vacuum, because she talked for three hours about unseen materials. The primary accomplishment in this class was some interaction between the students and the library staff. However, when compared with previous student library problems, the lecture was a blazing success; and Mrs. Williams was invited back the next year.

About two years later the task was assumed by her successor, Mrs. Martha Lapas. Besides discussing the chapter, she provided them with a bibliography of indexes and books, both old and new, which were in Joyner Library, but not listed in their text.

In 1974, Library Director, Dr. Ralph Russell inaugurated the practice of having subject bibliographers. This idea came from a program developed at Earlham College in Indiana. Each reference librarian was assigned to work with two or more departments on campus concerning such library activities as acquisitions, serials, bibliographical instruction, and any other library problems that might arise.

One of the departments assigned to me was Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Safety. The work with the graduate research class came with it. The class was small (it was summer school), and we had moved into the new wing of Joyner Library. I received permission from Dr. Martinez to hold the class informally in the library instead of the regular classroom. We met in the Reference Department for three one-hour sessions. I showed them the physical location of indexes, how to use each index, and other facilities that Joyner Library had to offer. At the end of each lecture they were able to examine each index and to ask questions.

When Dr. Eugene Brunelle became director in 1976, he introduced the Sangamon Plan, which was an expansion of our program. The librarians' titles were changed to Library Service Representatives, and we were encouraged to work more closely with the teaching faculty on all levels of library activity, including attending departmental meetings if possible.

## The Physical Education Graduation Research Course

During the summer of 1977, Dr. Jimmy Grimsley decided that each of the students not writing a thesis in the research course should prepare a bibliography on his or her particular interest in the field. The requirements were to spend at

least sixty hours in library research, to use at least five different indexes and the card catalog, and to use correct bibliographic form according to *Form and Style: Theses, Reports, Term Papers* by William Campbell, the text for the course. The bibliographies were graded by both Dr. Grimsley and me.

The class met in the library each day and I lectured every other day for five sessions. The other class days were spent as laboratory sessions in which the students used the information from the lectures. During the laboratory session, I worked individually with those preparing bibliographies, and Dr. Grimsley worked with those writing theses. A copy of each bibliography is kept on file in the Reference Department of the library for use by other patrons. At the end of the course, the students were asked to evaluate the course.

For the past two years, the Physical Education graduate research course has been taught only during the Fall semester at night and during one summer session. All master's degree candidates are thus encouraged to take it as one of their beginning courses. Many students had suggested this scheduling in their course evaluations. Among other advantages, the students writing theses can get their research started early, and those compiling a bibliography learn correct search strategy. All are able to pursue their particular interests after graduation. Both faculty members have been very receptive to library instruction by a librarian and have been most cooperative in trying new ideas in bibliography instruction.

In the 1979 Fall semester night class, many of the students were at East Carolina for the first time, and I tried to take into consideration during bibliographic instruction classes. The class, which met once a week for three hours, was held in the library, and I lectured about one and one-half hours each week for ten classes. When not lecturing, I worked with individual students, giving assistance with problems concerning topic or the use of certain indexes.

The major requirement for the course is either to complete the first three chapters of a thesis or to compile an annotated bibliography. The annotations have to be at least a paragraph in length and must be from scholarly books and journal articles. By requiring that the bibliography be annotated, the assignment fulfills the requirements of research and writing. The annotated bibliographies are turned in to me and are graded by both of us.

I now give a final examination in the course which asks for general information about Joyner Library; for specific information about certain indexes; and for information from their text on library research, writing papers, and compiling annotated bibliographies. Each student is asked to evaluate the class and to offer suggestions for improving future classes. One of the suggestions I get repeatedly is that a similar type class be offered to students when they select their undergraduate major area of study to enable them to use their time and the library more efficiently, and to produce better research papers. Almost every evaluation contains a note of student appreciation for the instruction in, and demand for, practical application of correct research techniques in this class.

Enthusiasm for library instruction continues to be reinforced as students gain confidence in their ability to use the library extremely well, a skill that is paramount in the process of self-education which will continue long after students leave our campus.

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