



Chapter Council Presents
Sharing Roundtables

MLA Annual Meeting

Chicago IL

Sunday, May 18, 2008

Final Report Form

Liaisons Stepping Out of the Library

Participants: __

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In a brief format, please list topics discussed and ideas shared. Use the back of this sheet or an extra sheet if necessary:

Rebecca Davis distributed a handout outlining the goals of a sample liaison program and examples of liaison activities in the areas of communication and instruction; information gathering; collection development; and program development (adapted from Bridgewater State College, Maxwell Library):
http://www.bridgew.edu/Library/liaison_goals.cfm

Participants spoke of these goals and challenges:

- Small library staffs serving many departments and hundreds or even thousands of users (For example, David said that at Harvard there are 18 teaching hospitals and a faculty of 9,000).
- Some librarians have heavy workload because they are adept at marketing their services and/or because assigned department is responsive; others deliver few services because don't feel comfortable marketing and/or because assigned department is unresponsive
- It can be difficult to market services and/or expertise that users may not realize would be beneficial or they believe they already know or don't need
- For the NIH (Rex), informationists often serve user groups that are distant from the library, requiring travel and a lot of time out of the library
- Mary, at a teaching hospital in Minnesota, doesn't currently have a liaison program in place but her library is looking to establish one; Valorie is a liaison for the first time and is looking for ideas; Sally, who does community health outreach at Utah State, has no formal program but notes her library has a strong community health regional presence in the state; Judy at Creighton University is looking to refine a current liaison program and develop a plan for greater reach and effectiveness

Ideas, Examples & Discussion

- Library liaisons can aspire to be proactive and interactive, engaged in *actively finding out and gathering information from users* in order to provide appropriate services. We need to be sure we listen to our users.
- Outreach Librarian Rebecca of UC Davis cited library consultant Pat Wagner, who teaches, among other topics, "Marketing As If Your Library Depended on It." Wagner suggests librarians prioritize by taking a close look at what they spend most of their time doing, and ask themselves what they'd *like* to spend more of their time doing.
- Rebecca said the liaison program at UC Davis is 5 – 6 years old and in many cases has been successful, in large part depending on the clinical area.
 - Rather than trying to serve every individual clinical department, the UC Davis medical library assigns liaisons to interdisciplinary centers and larger collaborations within the medical center; there isn't enough library staff to adequately cover every discipline. They adopted a "strategic pick and choose" approach.
 - Monthly seminar programs/presentations on such topics as cancer, co-sponsored by clinical areas and the library, have been successful.
 - Library liaison wear badges that identify their assigned center or clinical collaborative.
 - Liaisons do not necessarily have expertise or background in their assigned clinical area; they learn as they go and bring their own unique added value to the services they provide users.

- Sally at Utah noted that developing relationships doesn't happen overnight, it takes time, and that it's useful to identify key players and early adopters.
- Rex at NIH noted that as informationists they sometimes "cold call" division directors.
- Mary at her teaching hospital spoke of success reaching out to dental groups at grand rounds and seminars. Librarians can start "small" and keep in mind that five out of six contacts may generate nothing, but the sixth contact may bring results.
- David at Harvard uses a unique "giveaway," MOO (trademark) minicards with information about key medical resources, which he distributes to his users

Expectations (of liaisons and of clients) and liaison support

- Rebecca at UC Davis noted that liaison responsibilities can be made part of one's job descriptions, with specific minimum expectations, such as going to department clinical and social events and sending periodic emails. (But don't oversell.)
- Rex said that at NIH, when a connection is established, a contract is signed, and the client provides an informationist or mentor/representative who works with the NIH liaison. He noted that liaison workload is often feast or famine.
- In libraries that choose to formally evaluate liaisons, librarians can be evaluated by obtaining feedback from clients/users, tracking searches by clinical department, and by length of time of searches.
- Judy at Creighton said they developed a blog for liaison librarians to share experiences, but it hasn't been heavily used.
- At University of Utah, community health librarians add monthly updates of best practices or lessons learned to the library intranet so that there can be sharing of information and collaboration.

Rebecca wrapped up our session by reminding us to listen to our users and learn from them!

Recorder: Please send your report (MS Word file attachment preferred) by Monday, June 9, 2008 to:

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