

TEACHING FACULTY AND LIBRARIANS:
PARTNERS IN LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

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For the past decade librarians have been talking to each other about topics such as library orientation, bibliographic or library instruction, and user education. Occasionally these ideas are even mentioned to faculty members. But what do these terms mean? Who is the user? What is or should be the relationship between the librarian and faculty at your institution? This essay is an attempt both to define these terms and to relate specific means for the instructional interaction of librarians and teaching faculty.

Lawrence Clark Powell, a well-known librarian - philosopher, observed: "People turn to books for all that books hold for people: knowledge and power, distraction, delight, strength, and solace. Some need no help, no intermediaries. More, however, do need help, do need librarians as guides."¹ Powell's assertion that librarians are guides suggests a first role of instructional partner with the faculty. The guidance implied by such a partnership goes far beyond the usual library orientation to include search strategies for better library use.

Library orientation usually denotes a simple tour of the library's facilities lasting less than one hour. This superficial library orientation has evolved into "library instruction" which, simply defined, is teaching students how to find information efficiently and effectively in the modern college library. Library instruction make users both efficient and effective. Efficiency saves time. By wandering through the stacks long enough and looking through enough books, a student probably will eventually find some information. But by learning to use appropriate bibliographic tools -- catalogs, indexes and abstracts, encyclopedias and dictionaries, and subject bibliographies--in the correct order (what we librarians call "search strategy") that same student can find the information much more efficiently. Effective use means getting the best information. A student can usually find some information on almost any topic, but is it the best? The latest? The most appropriate? By learning the appropriate search strategy--and strategies may vary from discipline to discipline--a student can efficiently find the most useful information.

Library instruction including search strategy is even more useful when integrated into the individual discipline. It is much more effective than instruction given apart from any perceived or immediate need on the part of the student. Many people say that the library is the heart of the college. However, I maintain that rather than the library being the heart, the teaching/learning process is the true heart. An integration of library instruction with a specific discipline reinforces the centrality of the library to the college. As a result of these interactions, students gain a stimulus to their thinking, an enrichment of their values, a challenge to their prejudices, and the development of an informed skepticism. The library's role in all of this is to enhance

the process as well as support it. Only by tying instruction to disciplines can the library be the heart of the institution.

The library is not fulfilling that role in many institutions. We librarians are faced daily with the question "Where is the Readers' Guide?," which as every reference librarian knows, is second in frequency only to "Can I use your pen?" Generally, the student does not want the location of the Readers' Guide. Rather, this question means that this is the only periodical index the student knows from high school and he/she thinks that, for whatever the assignment at hand, it is a good idea to use a periodical index. Our students have come to college without being taught much about the library. High school libraries have neither the great variety nor the sophistication of materials that college libraries have. Thus, "Where is the Reader's Guide?" often masks a need for Social Sciences Index, Historical Abstracts, or some other index, but no one has ever told the student that specialized indexes exist. Perhaps the student's real need is not for periodical articles at all; perhaps he/she needs an authoritative survey of a topic such as might be found in The Encyclopedia of American History. After years of being told not to rely solely on encyclopedias, the student is not about to request one regardless of how specialized it might be. Often we librarians have the task of translating the initial question of "Where is the Readers' Guide?" into something more like: "I have to do a paper on life in the medieval castle and I have no idea where to start." The translation of requests would be much easier if librarians were consulted in advance by the faculty regarding their intent.²

Students should know how to make effective use of the library for a variety of additional reasons. Our society has rapidly become an information-based society. Graduates of colleges, and indeed all people, will be determined to be a success or failure by their ability to find, organize, and use information. A successful and informed person must also be a discriminating user of information. Learning how to use a library effectively can be a major step toward these abilities. There are more immediate reasons for instituting a library instruction program. Your students will do better work, be more independent in their work, and have more motivation.

Finally a partnership in library instruction goes beyond helping students and faculty. A last reason for library instruction is administrative. Library instruction helps to insure that the library collection will be used, at least more effectively than it otherwise would be. Cost-effectiveness is always a prime consideration to a budget-conscious administrator. In this day and age when many academic administrators question the cost of instruction and materials, particularly in the humanities, it helps if library materials are used often by those disciplines.

The validity of library instruction as a partnership is one thing, but what practical means can be used to implement this? In a recent article the author envisioned an ideal situation in which "the library and teacher...interact, cooperate, plan together to implement each other's goals...where you, the teacher cannot...resist working cooperatively with the librarian in developing projects and activities using...materials which the library can then

proceed to teach on a new basis."³ This does sound idealistic; however, you can have assistance in planning projects and implementing them, in guiding and directing the students to the proper sources if you and librarians talk and work together more than is customary. You must insist upon library instruction programs which are integrated into the curriculum, prepare subject and discipline related assignments, explore team-teaching possibilities and insist on the students' learning more about library research. It is important for the student to see collaboration between teacher and librarian so that he/she sees that the teacher's knowledge complements the librarian's knowledge and vice versa. Library skills are not in reality separable from subject matter and exploration of a discipline is not separable from a lively and independent discovery of its literature.

A first step in forming the partnership is to realize that libraries are rapidly changing, from "storehouse[s] of knowledge" to providers of information. Our libraries today remain storehouses of knowledge but additionally they are media centers providing production services, slides, records, tapes, films, and graphic services to both faculty and students. They are computer centers, although small ones, providing on-line computer searches through machine-readable databases and data archives for class work and research. They are members of cooperative networks through which primary as well as secondary source materials may be obtained.

These changes allow for specific suggestions on ways in which you and your librarian can cooperatively use some of the materials and services of your library. Some of these have been tried at Georgia College; others have been used at other institutions.

Most college libraries have a special collections room where you may think only researchers or serious scholars are allowed. However, our history students may, with prior instruction and proper supervision, use the primary sources there. Such materials as local business records, ledgers, diaries, letters, and other writings can be examined in depth, edited, annotated, analyzed, or compared to economic records of other areas. Some of our history students choose letters written during the Civil War, read them, seek additional information about persons and events mentioned, and write commentaries on the materials. Newspapers are used to help in this project. Bound issues of pre-Civil War newspapers can be used to analyze politics of the day.

A popular assignment for lower division history students is to examine newspaper holdings, e.g., New York Times, Atlanta Constitution, and our local Milledgeville Union Recorder for the dates of their births. They must record headlines for that particular date, and then, using other sources, both primary and secondary, write a background story of newsworthy events surrounding the day of their birth. Newspapers provide a variety of term paper topics, including social events, world news events, local politics, fashions, or the history of local institutions whether they be academic, medical or corrections.

In order to get our history students familiar with specific discipline-related library materials, members of my staff have designed library scavenger hunts with all questions answered by an historical library source. Examples of questions and sources might be as follows:

1. Who said "War is Hell?" (William T. Sherman from Barlett's Familiar Quotations.)
2. Where did the town of Dry Branch, Georgia, get its name? (As a result of prohibition laws which removed the stills located along the streams in the area; from Scratch Ankle, USA.)
3. Who was the first woman to serve as a college President? (Frances Elizabeth Willard; from Famous First Facts.)
4. What colleges in Georgia did Jimmy Carter attend? (Georgia Southwestern and Georgia Tech; from Facts About the Presidents.)
5. When was the first beer brewed in America? (1587 in Sir Walter Raleigh's Roanoke Colony; from Famous First Facts.)
6. Who was the first woman to occupy a seat in the U.S. Senate? (Rebecca Latimer Felton of Georgia, on October 3, 1922 to fill a vacancy caused by a death; from Famous First Facts.)

Not only genealogists are using federal census materials these days. Upper division and graduate students are using census records to write detailed descriptions and comparisons of populations and businesses. Students combine their library knowledge with computer knowledge and run cross tabulations using such computer programs as SPSS.⁴

One assignment students enjoy is examining various documents from history such as the Declaration of Independence, the Gettysburg Address, or a war treaty. In order to analyze the document, they must do some research on the period during which it was written, the people involved, and surrounding events. All libraries will have either Documents of American History or Historic Documents with which to begin this project. Editing or annotating a document is another possible assignment.

Documents on microfilm can be borrowed through interlibrary loan for class assignments. One faculty member borrows reels of microfilm containing diplomatic records of the 18th and early 19th century from the Federal Records Center. Thus the students read and decipher dispatches from American diplomats located throughout the world during the period of the American and French Revolutions and the Napoleonic Wars. They read of concerns, military activity, meetings and more. They also read the London Times of the same period and write papers on assigned topics. This gives the students a real insight into what historical research is and when and how one uses primary sources. Another side light of this exercise is that the students are able to observe the writing styles used in other eras. They particularly enjoy John Quincy Adams' letters because of his legible writing.

Two relatively new library resources or services lend themselves well to the teaching of history. Most colleges now have a media center where materials can be produced as well as borrowed. More and more students are doing the research

necessary for producing either slide/tape shows or video programs. For such a project students must know enough about the library to locate material, synthesize and summarize it, and write the necessary script. If only pictures and photographs are to be used, the students must choose them; if the production is a dramatic one, research must be conducted on proper costumes, sets, language and background music. The teacher, librarian, and students must be fully aware of the objectives of the assignment for it to be successful.

Computer-assisted reference service and use of machine-readable databases and data archives for class work and research in history and the social sciences has been relatively slow to develop. The two principal machine-readable databases for secondary historical literature are Historical Abstracts, covering world history from 1450 to the present, excluding the U.S. and Canada; and America: History and Life, covering U.S. and Canadian history and culture from prehistory to the present. Several other non-bibliographic databases have been developed in recent years. Such titles as U.S. Historical Election Returns, 1788-1979, U.S. Congressional Roll Call Voting Records, 1789-1980, and a variety of census records for countries throughout the world, including our own, are now available.

The historical method is generally retrospective and comprehensive in nature and does not rely necessarily on current literature; a researcher must conduct an exhaustive search in both primary and secondary sources. Quite often this means devising a more elaborate search strategy and acquainting the user historian with several more sources than might be necessary for a chemist or biologist. Librarians and historians must always keep in mind the integration of computer-assisted research with traditional research methods. Online searching is only a supplement, not a substitute for traditional historical research methods.

This essay shares thoughts on the necessary partnership between librarians and historians. The practical suggestions only begin to list the ways that the library or librarians might serve you and the way this partnership provides a reinforcement for both teaching and library use. But the partnership between teaching faculty and librarian is central to the educational process. While faculty must set the goals of the curriculum, librarians must assure that students have access to all the resources necessary to attain these goals. As a faculty member from the University of Colorado has stated, "Alone, faculty members impart knowledge, stimulate the students to want to know more, and provide them with a few of the tools necessary to assist them in the quest for knowledge. In isolation, librarians can teach library skills, but these skills serve no purpose unless they enable students to meet specific goals. It seems self-evident that cooperation strengthens both our endeavors. Without it, students and ultimately the whole educational enterprise suffer."⁵

NOTES

¹Miriam Dudley, "Teachers and Librarians: Partners in Library Instruction," Catholic Library World (July-August 1980), pp. 17-21.

²This idea is further developed in Jeremy Sayles' contribution to "Innovations in Instruction," Georgia Association of Historians Newsletter, 10, No. 3.

³Robert E. Miller, "Teaching Skills in the Retrieval and Utilization of Materials and Equipment for Students and Faculty," Catholic Library World (March 1979), pp. 327-29.

⁴Thomas F. Armstrong, "They Tell Me It's Fun," Proceedings and Papers of Georgia Association of Historians (1983), pp. 88-91.

⁵Charles R. Middleton, "Academic Libraries and the Educational Process," in Faculty Involvement in Library Instruction, ed. Hannelore B. Rader (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Pierian Press, 1976), pp. 37-40.