ACTIVITIES & EXPERIENCES
OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS
EMBEDDED IN ONLINE COURSES

Starr Hoffman, May 25 – 28, 2010
Chania, Crete, Greece
Purpose

Study academic librarians embedded in online courses.

- determine common practices
  - activities
  - promotion methods
- assess various experiences
  - time management
  - number of people involved
  - common vs. un-common experiences
Definitions

- **embedded librarian**
  a librarian that participates in a particular online course by logging into the course management system (CMS)

- **blended course**
  a course that holds key portions online and face-to-face; sometimes called a “hybrid course”

- **course with an online component**
  a course that is held face-to-face, but where key resources or extra content is presented online (for instance, a course webpage linked to optional readings)

- **CMS (or LMS)**
  Course Management System (or Learning Management System): software application designed for delivering online courses; Blackboard is a common example
Methodology

- six participants (academic librarians)
- several different institutional types
- geographically dispersed
- gathered information in several ways:
  - email discussions
  - observation of participants’ library websites
  - online survey
  - phone interviews
Institution 1

- public
- 22,516 FTE students
- Carnegie Class: Master’s Colleges & Universities
- Tennessee

- began in 2004
- 35 sections per semester
  - (primary librarian; others have 2 or 3)
- email faculty
- 6 librarians; 1 is designated “Embedded Librarian”
- not time-consuming (except beginning of semester)
Institution 2

- public
- 50,275 FTE students
- Carnegie Class: Doctorate-Granting Universities
- Florida

- began around 2006
- 5 or fewer sections per semester
- faculty hear by word-of-mouth
- 6 librarians at 4 campuses
- very time-consuming
Institution 3

- public
- 8,768 FTE students
- Carnegie Class: Associate’s Colleges
- Arkansas

- began in Summer 2006
- 11 fully online; 7 blended sections / semester
- email faculty
- primarily 1 librarian
- not very time-consuming (only at certain times)
Institution 4

- private
- 16,494 FTE students
- Carnegie Class: Master’s Colleges & Universities
- New York

- began in Spring 2008
- module automatically open to every online class
- no longer promote to faculty
- 1 librarian, 1 library technologist
- not very time-consuming
Institution 5

- public
- 3,812 FTE students
- Carnegie Class: Associate’s Colleges
- Arizona

- began in Spring 2007
- 27-37 sections per semester
- email faculty
- 2 librarians
- very busy
Institution 6

- private, for-profit
- 22,316 FTE students
- Carnegie Class: Doctorate-Granting Universities
- Minnesota

- began in Fall 2007
  - tried three different models
- 8 sections per semester (quarterly semesters)
  - automatically included as a module in each course
- 1 librarian
- not too busy (courses & assignments are staggered)
# Email Activities of Embedded Librarians

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<th>outside CMS</th>
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## Use of Discussion Boards

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## Other Activities

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<th>phone reference</th>
<th>library instruction (online)</th>
<th>library instruction (F2F)</th>
<th>posted FAQ</th>
<th>link to library catalog</th>
<th>link to tutorials</th>
<th>link to library databases</th>
<th>link to subject guides</th>
<th>link to other library resources</th>
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Subject Areas
for Courses with Embedded Librarians

- physical sciences
- engineering & comp. sci.
- humanities & social sciences
- performing & fine arts
- education
- business
- medicine, health, nursing
- law / other professional...

Legend:
- Institution 1
- Institution 2
- Institution 3
- Institution 4
- Institution 5
- Institution 6
Level of Students in Courses with Embedded Librarians

- high school
- undergraduates
- graduates

Institutions:
- institution 1
- institution 2
- institution 3
- institution 4
- institution 5
- institution 6
Types of Questions
Received from Online Students

- Reference
- Technical (CMS)
- Database Access
- Citations

Institutions:
- Institution 1
- Institution 2
- Institution 3
- Institution 4
- Institution 5
- Institution 6
Online Education Experiences of Embedded Librarians

- Online course(s): 1
- Blended course(s): 3
- Course(s) with online component: 1
- No online course(s) of any kind: 2

Courses taken by embedded librarians
Discussion: Findings

- General Findings:
  - prevalence of term “embedded librarian”
  - difficulty defining embedded librarian role

- Surprising Finds:
  - prevalence of proactive email
  - time wasn’t an issue for most
Discussion: Best Practices

- Best Practices:
  - involve other librarians
  - create library module (or “course”)
  - email online faculty about service
  - define embedded librarian’s role
  - post in a single, library-specific discussion board
  - monitor discussion board (RSS)
  - save email/discussion board posts
  - check courses at set times
  - plot assignment deadlines
  - proactively post information at point-of-need
Directions for Future Research

- **purpose**
  - why were these services created?
  - what are they designed to do best?

- **efficacy**
  - do they perform that purpose effectively?
  - is there a discernable difference for students?

- **motivation**
  - why do librarians decide to offer this service?

- **expectations vs. realities**
  - after the experience, did the purpose change?
  - was the service continued or abandoned?
Any Questions?

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