

Chapter 4.13

Leveraging Libraries to Support Academic Technology

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ABSTRACT

Through leveraging the relationship between libraries and technology, colleges and universities can make the best use of the skills that librarians bring to the table. At DePaul University, three positions have been created, which report to two campus units: The University Libraries and Instructional Technology Development. The consolidation of both library and instructional technology perspectives to create this first group of blended positions at DePaul has been successful, due in large part to the fact that the primary responsibilities of these positions are in areas of mutual interest: instruction, collection development, and technology support for faculty and students, whether on a consulting basis or at the reference desk. As libraries and librarians become

ever more closely and actively aligned with the teaching mission of the university, universities and colleges can transform librarians' roles within the academy by leveraging their skills to enhance teaching and learning in today's online environment.

INTRODUCTION

As more and more library services and resources are delivered online, libraries and technology become increasingly intertwined. In their article "*Merging Library and Computing Services at Kenyon College: A Progress Report*," Oden Jr. et al. (2001) describe the phenomenon as follows:

...the era when computers largely performed repetitive and otherwise tedious tasks (such as data processing) transformed to an era when computers

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served equally to store, retrieve, and manipulate information. The transformation has meant an increasing overlap between library services and computing services, making an integrated approach seem sensible. (Oden Jr. et al., 2001)

More and more institutions are exploring this model of combined library and IT services in various ways. Ferguson, Spencer, and Metz (2004) give brief descriptions of similar undertakings at Bucknell University, Pacific Lutheran University, and Wheaton College, and note “the need for the library and IT organizations to work together to support today’s scholars and students in a much more seamless fashion.”

Jerry D. Campbell, CIO and Dean of University Libraries at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, points to initiatives undertaken “within academic libraries in the digital age: providing quality learning spaces; creating metadata; offering virtual reference services; teaching information literacy; choosing resources and managing resource licenses; collecting and digitizing archival materials; and maintaining digital repositories.” (Campbell, 2006) These are just a few examples of how libraries have expanded services and resources using technology. To make the best use of the skills that librarians bring to the table, colleges and universities must continue to explore further avenues to leverage the relationship between libraries and technology.

In some environments as at Kenyon College, described by Oden Jr. et al. (2001), the integration occurs not only at the departmental or administrative level, but also within individual positions, requiring staff with expertise in both arenas. Barth and Cottrell (2002) describe in some depth the Librarian Technology Consultant model adopted at Kenyon College, in which positions serve as liaisons to specific departments and schools. They state, “This type of cross-focus began to build bridges with constituents, notably faculty, to better serve the user by bringing a more holistic approach

to service through focusing on the patrons rather than the collections.”

BLENDING LIBRARY AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY POSITIONS

Library mission statements generally speak to providing support for the instructional and research programs at a given university. DePaul University’s library mission is no exception to this rule, and states that “as an integral part of the academic function of DePaul University, the libraries’ mission is to support the current and anticipated instructional and research programs of the University by providing collections, services, facilities, and personnel to satisfy the information and research needs of DePaul students, faculty, and staff.” (Brown, 2002)

To serve this mission, the libraries have facilities on all six DePaul campuses, with paper, microform, video, and audio collections as well as extensive electronic collections available 24×7×365 to university affiliates from anywhere in the world via the Internet. Each library facility also has public access computers, and all students, faculty, and staff have electronic access to reference services, document delivery, and course reserves. As libraries increasingly deliver their services online, our patrons begin to expect this type of access, and are beginning to demand the same type of access to their other course materials. Because libraries have led in this area, librarians become natural advocates for electronic access to materials.

According to its mission, the University’s department of Instructional Technology Development (ITD) “advocates for students and collaborates with faculty and university departments in developing a learning environment enriched through effective use of technology in the curriculum.” The compatible missions of ITD and the libraries make these academic support units

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