Chapter 9
Collaborating Off Campus:
Creating Communities of Practice with New Partners

Adam T. Brisk
University of Minnesota Duluth, USA

Kim Pittman
University of Minnesota Duluth, USA

Matt Rosendahl
University of Minnesota Duluth, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how academic libraries can partner with public, school, and special libraries – despite differences in mission or size – to meet the professional development needs of librarians, support staff, administrators, trustees, and volunteers. Using Lake Superior Libraries Symposium as a model, the chapter will explore methods for initiating and sustaining an effective community of practice. By joining forces with colleagues off campus, academic library staff members can better meet the needs of increasingly technologically sophisticated students and faculty and provide the highest quality service. The chapter will provide a literature review about communities of practice and look at how librarians can establish and nurturing a productive group of library professionals. Additional examples of academic librarians' involvement in regional, homegrown library networks and organizations is included to compare and contrast with LSLS.

INTRODUCTION

The buzz-phrase advice for innovative problem solving is to "think outside the box." If that box is the library, then academic librarians have accomplished a lot of thinking and action outside the box: remote and virtual reference services, embedded and personal librarians, discovery layers and external linking with Google Scholar, and much more. The literature is full of ways for academic librarians to collaborate with each other and with their campus stakeholders.

But in the current state of higher education, academic libraries face unique challenges. While institutions work to demonstrate the value of a degree, librarians are striving to demonstrate the value they contribute to student persistence, retention, and success. This work takes place under significant economic pressures and amid constant, accelerating change. Declining enrollments at many institutions and reductions in public aid to colleges and universities hurt the entire institution. But in particular, they impair the library, which invests significantly in developing collections that have burdensome inflationary costs. Opportunities for collaboration on campus can be difficult in this environment of financial instability, and access to professional development for librarians can be nearly impossible given the high cost of conference travel, employee-funded membership dues, and registration fees for online or in-person events that feature experts and leaders. The Association of College and Research Libraries Metrics 2014 survey queried libraries about their trends in the application of professional development funds, and the results indicated that this is an area of concern or at least a topic worthy of our collective attention.

Limited access to professional development opportunities is especially problematic for library employees in rural or remote areas. Kendrick, Leaver, and Tritt (2013) surveyed academic librarians working in small and rural libraries in order to identify their primary interests in professional development and the barriers they encountered when seeking learning opportunities. The most significant barrier for librarians seeking professional development was funding, with participants noting that institutional financial support is often insufficient to cover the full cost of conference attendance. Small and rural academic librarians also found travel distance to be a significant challenge, noting that the cost of attendance becomes even more prohibitive when conferences and workshops are held in locations that are not easily accessible. All of these hurdles lead to a sense of isolation, what Kendrick, Leaver, and Tritt refer to as "the negative emotional impact of being physically separated from larger professional communities of practice" (p. 59). Additionally, those surveyed indicated that larger conferences often address topics or projects "geared more towards academic libraries where there are more staff members and people

28 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/collaborating-off-campus/155416

Related Content

Strategic Planning in Special Libraries and Information Centers
Lian Ruanand Jan Sykes (2018). *Library Science and Administration: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 447-472).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/strategic-planning-in-special-libraries-and-information-centers/191523

Role of Medical/Health Librarians in Promoting the Use of Medical Library Resources and Services
Violet E. Ikolo (2022). *Technological Advancements in Library Service Innovation (pp. 169-180).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/role-of-medicalhealth-librarians-in-promoting-the-use-of-medical-library-resources-and-services/296915

Ethical Issues in Library and Information Science Profession in Nigeria: An Appraisal
Afolayan Oluyinka Titilope (2017). *International Journal of Library and Information Services (pp. 11-22).*
www.irma-international.org/article/ethical-issues-in-library-and-information-science-profession-in-nigeria-an-appraisal/188341

Resource Sharing and Mutually Beneficial Cooperation: A Look at the New United Model in Public and College Libraries
Qi Yin, Wu Yingying, Zhou Yanand Meng Xiaojia (2017). *Academic Library Development and Administration in China (pp. 334-352).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/resource-sharing-and-mutually-beneficial-cooperation/165600

Preferences and Motivations of Nigerian Undergraduates in Sharing COVID-19 Information on Social Media
Oluyemi Folorunso Ayanbodeand Wole Michael Olatokun (2022). *International Journal of Library and Information Services (pp. 1-21).*
www.irma-international.org/article/preferences-and-motivations-of-nigerian-undergraduates-in-sharing-covid-19-information-on-social-media/301607