Jumpstarting the Research Process: Promoting One-on-One Consultations to Meet Student Needs

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Background

• Patent consultations
  • Primary public users
  • Responsibility of Patent Librarian
• Research and Instruction responsibilities
• Liaison responsibilities
• Overall: Largely informal process, practice varied from librarian to librarian
HUEC 2110: Good Intentions That Backfire

• New/adjunct instructor in the Human Nutrition & Dietetics Department
• Asked students if they had been taught to use the library and do research
• Did not ask for instruction but encouraged students to contact the library subject specialist for assistance
• Result: All 35 students contacted the librarian to set up a research consultation. It was a busy two weeks. Consults took about 30 minutes each, sometimes longer
Formalized Consultation Evolution

• August 2013: Reviewed one-shot workshop objectives
  • Revised to include research consultations as a concept covered
• September 2013: Began researching tool for scheduling consultations
• October 2013:
  • User Services Task Force formed
    • Charge: Determine best practices for general and subject specific consultations for librarians, develop an implementation plan
Literature Review Best Practices

- **Consultation referrals**: Professors, TAs, or student peers
- **Ensure the consultation is a conversation**: Each contributes expertise. Librarian—knowledge of library sources; student—subject and course requirements
- **Librarian as a coach**: Coach rather than irreproachable expert, with both suggesting search options and coming to a consensus on strategies
- **Convenient and easy to access and use**: Students prioritize and perceive beneficial services and tools that are fast and convenient
- **Shift the focus of consultations from search strategy to evaluation**: Since students overestimate their information literacy skills, they may not be willing to revise search, may be content with the information they find. More meaningful to focus on evaluation and helping students shift through results
- **Give consultations a prominent role in marketing strategy**: Encouraging consultations should be a critical component of a comprehensive library marketing strategy. Relentlessly promote librarian availability through website and face-to-face efforts with faculty and student
- **Don’t overwhelm**: Provide and show access to only what they need at that moment. (Suarez, 2013)
Literature Review Best Practices

• Market at all one-shot sessions, especially upper-level courses, and through faculty

• Seek methods to encourage learning: e.g. providing consultation at two computers so student can apply skills

• Keep records of what occurs in the consultation to increase professional awareness (Gale & Evan, 2007)

• Emphasize time saving is the best way to market and help convince students to engage in consultations (Martin & Park, 2010)
Formalized Consultation Evolution

• October 2013:
  • Student Government LibCal funded
    • Met with Student Government to demonstrate LibCal for collaborative study room online booking and librarian consultation booking
Ask Us! - Ask a Question or Search Our FAQ

Type a question...

Ask Us

Useful Tip: Ask questions or search by keyword, e.g., anthropology database

182 Answered Questions | Browse All | Change Topic | View All Topics

Ask Us!

- Text Messaging Research Assistance: Text us at (225) 245-0667 during Research Desk hours.
- Email us a question: You may submit questions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Telephone Research Assistance: Call us at (225) 578-8875 during Research Desk hours.

Schedule a Consultation with a Librarian or Reserve a Room

Library Consultations and Room Bookings

This site allows members of the LSU community to better interact with the resources of LSU Libraries. The following actions may be helpful to you.

- Schedule a one-on-one consultation with a Research Librarian
- Reserve an electronic classroom (2nd floor, Middleton Library)
- Reserve a collaborative group space (3rd or 4th floor, Middleton Library)

Live Chat

Need help now? Ask your librarian.

Chat with Us!

Name (leave blank for anonymous chat)

Your Question

Start Chat
Welcome

Welcome to the LSU Libraries Booking Page!

This site allows members of the LSU community to better interact with the resources of LSU Libraries. The following actions may be helpful to you:

• Schedule a one-on-one consultation with a Research Librarian. (Click here to browse the directory of subject librarians.)
• Reserve one of the electronic classrooms on the 2nd floor of Middleton Library.
• Reserve one of the collaborative group spaces on the 3rd or 4th floor of Middleton Library.

Schedule an Appointment

• Aaron Lercher
• Andrea Habert
• Cristina Caminiti
• David Dunaway
• Emily Frank
• Kelly Blessinger
• Marty Miller
• Mike Russo
• Mitch Fontenot
• Paul Hrycej

Browse by Calendars

Browse by Event Organizer
• Consultation Hours

Appointment Schedule: Emily Frank

Making an appointment:

Click on the green square that corresponds to the day and time that you would like to have an appointment. Fill out the popup form and submit. You will receive a confirmation email.

Don’t see a time that works?

Email me with suggested meeting times at efrank7@lsu.edu.

Directions to Emily Frank’s office (Middleton 141A):

Upon entering Middleton Library, turn left into the Information Commons. The Research Desk will be on the right when you enter this room. Let someone at the desk know that you are here to see me.
Formalized Consultation Evolution

• October 2013:
  • Text Lab refreshed
    • Room for users with disabilities reworked to be more multi-purpose
    • Renamed as Consultation Room
Formalized Consultation Evolution

- FY 2013-2014: 206 consultations by RIS librarians (~20/librarian)
  - On- and off-site
  - General and discipline specific
  - Self-sought, recommended, and required
ENGL 2000: Required Consultations

- Fall 2013: One instructor, 4 sections
  - Required students have a consultation with librarian
  - Subject-librarians emphasized
  - Students signed up with teaching librarian

- Upsides:
  - Huge increase in requests for consultations
  - Meaningful interaction with students

- Downsides:
  - Last minute wave of requests
  - Not distributed workload
  - Some students were disinterested, resentful of the requirement
ENGL 2000: Required Consultations

• Post semester email: “I am wondering if I should require two one-on-one sessions with the subject librarian: one to [...] make sure they have a workable topic, and then another [...] to dig deeper on their specific topic. What do you think? Will I be overworking you all too much with that”

• Librarians + Instruction meeting:
  • One consultation
  • Any available librarian—subject librarian deemphasized
  • Use LibCal (or email)—walk up requests discouraged
ENGL 2000: Required Consultations

• 3 sections spring 2013: 81 students
• Similar advantages and disadvantages
• Midterm survey: Did you find the required conference with the librarian helpful? Why or why not?
  • 73 responses
    • 59: Helpful
      • 15: Not necessary for this assignment
    • 14: Not helpful
      • 6: Will use this service in the future
Liaison Discipline-Specific Required Consultations

• **Embedded course – ARCH 2002**
  • Part of LSU’s QEP initiative – research intensive course
  • Initial contact early in the semester
    • Discussion of:
      • Useful library databases
      • Print and online resources
      • Issues of publisher reliability

• **Mid-semester**
  • Mind-mapping consultations – after mindmaps had already been completed:
    • Critique of source choices
    • Suggestions for better search terms and strategies
    • More appropriate online publications
    • Analysis of content (more of flipped consulting experience)

End-of-semester consultations on further research related topics (refining topic focus for final project), career information
Liaison Discipline-Specific Required Consultations

Positive outcomes:

• Face to face contact in a classroom setting
• Conversational nature of discussions
• Extended time for discussions
• Opportunity to tap librarian’s expertise in a particular discipline (Art & Architecture)
Liaison Discipline-Specific Required Consultations

Opportunities for improvement:

• Actual embedded consultations rare
  • work toward a more involved presence in the class
  • work toward increased partnership with class instructors
  • less of a ‘guest speaker’ sort of presence

• Gather more direct feedback on impact of required consultations

• Modify required aspect to more of a “check-in/check-up” appointment
  • discuss the effectiveness of individual research attempts up to that point.

• Encourage instructors to put a ‘due date’ for consultations early in the research process
  • Make experience more relevant
  • Potentially save students time and anxiety through ‘earlier intervention.’
Offsite -- Voluntary

• Some Librarians have ‘satellite office hours’, in their departmental liaison locations
  • Business
  • Art and Design
Agriculture is a big discipline. It includes: plant pathology, crop physiology, renewable natural resources, forestry, wildlife management, environmental management systems, food science, human nutrition, animal nutrition, animal sciences, poultry science, agriculture education, textiles, apparel design, merchandising, agribusiness, agricultural economics... AND MORE
Agriculture-Related Consultations: On-Site

- Requested by faculty, undergraduates, graduate students, AgCenter researchers, AgCenter faculty
- Also requested at times by the public, particularly those doing genealogical or historical research related to the LSU AgCenter or College of Agriculture, or history of agriculture in Louisiana
- Some disciplines request more consultations than others:
  - Human Nutrition (evidenced-based practice)
  - Renewable Natural Resources (capstone research project)
  - Human Resources Education & Workforce Development (special needs)
Agriculture-Related Consultations: Offsite

• Agriculture Residential College – requires holding office hours in Blake Hall, the dormitory
• 2 hours per week
• Faculty office or lobby
• Drop-in consultations with students, or specifically scheduled
• Students did not use office hours – observation shared with other instructors in the Agriculture Residential College
• Other offsite possibilities? No centralized location in which to conduct them.
Consultations - Embedded Classes: HUEC 3110

• HUEC 3110 is a research/writing intensive course in the Human Nutrition Major

• The instructor wanted specialized info lit instruction to address the accrediting requirement for Didactic Programs in Dietetics (from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics)

• The accrediting standards require students to be proficient in the use of evidenced-based nutrition counseling techniques and treatments
Special Info Lit Issues in the Sciences

• Evaluation of information sources is key, and is the skill most often lacking in students (per anecdotal stories provided by faculty)
  • Knowledge of the difference between original research articles and review articles
  • Understanding the format of an IMRD original research article and where to find specific information within an article
  • In Nutrition in particular, understanding the purpose of systematic reviews and/or metanalyses
  • Data literacy and statistical methods knowledge
Special Info Lit Issues in the Humanities

• Common issues/assumptions of first-time humanities students:
  • All art and architecture-related books are text-rich
  • Print resources available for all artists/architects
    • Entirety of work reproduced
    • Every individual piece has its own book, article, etc.
  • Names and attributions – historical changes
  • Knowledge of major publishers/publications in the discipline
    • Medium specific
    • Event specific
  • Google Scholar and humanities databases are identical
  • All libraries’ online humanities resources are searched by Discovery
  • Accuracy of MLA citations in databases
Consultations -- Voluntary

• LibCal – scheduling tool
  • Positive aspects
    • Librarians set up consulting hours available
      • Half-hour sessions
    • Allows students to schedule a session independently of a class
    • Relatively easy to use once located
  • Usage
    • Undergraduates – use when required
    • Graduates – most rely on email communications
• Tendency to receive more requests via email
Consultations -- Voluntary

- **LibCal**
  - **Opportunities for improvement**
    - Not extensively or consistently promoted
    - Some librarians show during instruction workshops
    - Occasionally addressed in LIS 1001 courses
    - Reference desk interactions
  - **Location on library’s web page**
    - Link is embedded in another page
    - Can be difficult to find
  - **Limited consultation hours**
    - Librarians’ work responsibilities limits consultation hours to certain days and times
    - Current information suggests that more flexible scheduling opportunities are of greater benefit.
Consultations -- Voluntary

• Mostly a ‘point of need’ situation
  • Student initiated
    • (possibly suggested by instructor, not required for class)
  • Librarians set up consultation hours via LibCal
  • If available, Librarians will take ‘walk-in’ requests

• Positive outcomes:
  • Increased student engagement during consultation process
  • Potentially learn to retrieve better resources
    • Higher quality coursework
    • Higher grades
  • Decreased stress
Consultations -- Voluntary

• Opportunities for improvement:
  • Students’ misconceptions of what a consultation is:
    • Librarian will do the research work for them
    • That the librarian will act as an editor of their papers
    • That consultations guarantee ‘A’ grades
  • Promotion of service
    • Many students do not realize that this service exists or that they can initiate requests for it
Assessment: Librarian Survey

• Fall 2014: 15 respondents

• Consultations should be recommended in courses where students complete research-intensive work: 74% agree or strongly agree
  • Should be required: 34% agree or strongly agree / 47% disagree

• The number of consultation requests I receive is manageable: 86% agree or strongly agree

• Providing consultations to my liaison areas is a worthwhile use of my time: 73% strongly agree
  • To other areas: 73% agree

• The consultations I provide are taken into consideration during my performance evaluations: 13% agree
Librarians and library benefit. Know clientele better. Learn more about curricula and research projects in liaison area. Determine strengths and weaknesses of the collection.
  
  BUT: Not enough time. Too few librarians. Requires considerable effort on part of librarian

If they are required, many don’t need it and it isn’t as useful. Can’t force someone to learn.
  
  BUT: Students would not take advantage of the service unless they are told to.

Individualized instruction opportunity. Able to make personal connections with students and faculty. Opens communication.
  
  BUT: Students may be intimidated by one-on-one instruction
  
  BUT: Lack of support/interest on part of faculty.

Do not know the impact consultations have, if they improve student work.
  
  BUT: Any recommendation or requirement for a consultation might not have an effect that shows up clearly or measurably.

I think consultations are a meaningful use of time--it’s harder to know if all students agree
  
  BUT: There is value in merely signaling to students that librarian consultations are available.
Sustaining the Research Consultation Model

• “[. . .] sustainability problems are a mark of success.” – Hines, 2013

• There are no easy answers. But there are always many questions!

• How does the research consultation model fit into the current service model provided by references/instruction?

• Does the model need to change? If research consultations are true reference interviews, and if the questions at your traditional reference desk are more directional in nature, can highly-trained student workers and GAs staff the desk and give librarians the time to respond to requests for research consultations/off-site office hours?
Reframing the Question . . .

• From *Are these research consultations worth it?* to *Are these consultations an effective use of a student and librarian’s time?*

• An answer: it always depends!

• There’s the scavenger hunt approach and then there’s the active learning/inquiry based approach
  
  • Scavenger hunt: required, not particularly meaningful because it does not address the specific information needs of an individual student.
  
  • Active learning: student seeks out a research consultation because they have identified a research issue and want to get past the issue – they are invested in finding solutions to their identified problems.
Reframing the Question...

• The “just in case” approach vs. the “just in time” approach
  • *Require the consultation* just in case students need it.
  • *Encourage the consultation* at the point of need, when students have identified research problems and are seeking answers.

• The Return on Investment (ROI) approach
  • What benefits do librarians get from conducting research consultations?
  • Do they count as reference questions, and can they be included in reference statistics?
  • Are they considered during performance evaluations?
  • How can they be evaluated to show the library’s impact on campus?


