Preparing Academic Librarians for a Changing Role:
A Canadian Information Literacy Program Case Study.

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Where is this statue?

Gimli, Manitoba!
Let’s talk about perceptions…

How do you picture Vikings?
Realities

- Ships for both raids and trade were crewed by social equals/freeborn men, with captain/owner directing activities
- Crews shared in booty and merchandise
- Crews were more like what we would call teams today
- All worked toward a common goal and shared the rewards

http://community.webshots.com/photo/46934928/46935116hXWcZC
Voyage of Discovery for Information Literacy

• Discovery: Librarians need to work collegially with faculty to make IL a success

• Discovery: Librarians need to make the voyage from trainer to teacher

• How do librarians take that voyage?
Today’s agenda

• Literature review of IL
  – Program characteristics
  – Coordinator characteristics
  – Librarian characteristics

• Case study, University of Manitoba Libraries

• SWOT analysis

• Development of IL model

• Roles of stakeholders
  – Administration
  – Faculty
  – Students
  – Librarians: Role of the librarian within the model
Perceptions of Librarians in Information Literacy

- How do librarians see themselves?
- How do others see librarians?
- How **SHOULD** librarians be seen?
- How do librarians move from one role to another?
3 Key Elements from the Literature Review:

- Characteristics of an IL Program
- Characteristics of IL Coordinators
- Characteristics of IL Librarians
An IL Program Should:

- Be inquiry-based
- Be student centred
- Promote academic success
- Support lifelong learning
- Address user needs and abilities
- Develop and use learning objectives
- Be an integral part of the curriculum
An IL Coordinator should be:

• a coach
• an advocate
• a builder
• a collaborator
• a politician
• a marketer
• a leader
An IL Librarian should be:

- A collaborator
- A colleague
- A participant
- A designer

- A teacher, not a trainer
Case study summary

• Information literacy in Canada fairly new and developing – looks to U.S. & Australia for inspiration

• University of Manitoba
  – One of Canada’s largest & oldest universities
  – Beginnings in agriculture; emphasis on sciences & technology now
  – Prides itself in ease of access to programs
Case study summary cont’d.

- Librarians at U of M have official faculty status, but….
- Are not faculty equals
- Faculty perceive librarians in a traditional way, particularly in regard to instruction
- Some inroads being made – success noted in particular with Textiles Sciences program
Textiles Sciences

• Initiative grew out of longstanding relationships between bibliographers & faculty
• New program = new methodologies
• Interdisciplinary nature of the program makes it ideal for IL
• Have worked through the summer with faculty, 2 new courses with IL-embedded outcomes will be launched in September
• Catalyst for change = U of M IL program
SWOT analysis of U of M IL program…so far

**Strengths**

- Multi-branch IL committee: recommended Coordinator position & foundation of new program
- Support of UML administration: Funding for Coordinator’s position
- Sanctioned administrative framework: strategic plan, terms of reference, acceptance of ACRL standards
- Pilot/Model programs in development
- *Longstanding instructional relationships with subject faculty*
SWOT continued

Weaknesses:
• Uncertainty over new roles
• Bureaucracy vs flexibility
• Collections vs instruction
• Lack of funding
• Satisfaction with traditional methods
Opportunities:

- Pilot programs are underway
  - Textiles
  - eTools
- IL requested in student survey
- *Possible U of M culture shift toward IL awareness*
SWOT continued

Threats:

- Lack of funding
- Limited/uneven support – administration & librarians
- Uncertainty re: program objectives
- Mixed perceptions of librarians by faculty

- Librarian perceptions of role: what is a librarian???????
Comment from Kari Gulbraar’s survey

"you imply a need for change? Since when is teaching OLD?"
How do librarians see themselves as teachers?

• Emphasis continues to be on collections and access to them
• Leads to an orientation to products and how to use them
• Leads to acceptance of a trainer\one-shot model
• Leads to a comfort zone – it’s what we know how to do best
Our Model of IL Program Development: The Big Picture

- Looks at the relationship among stakeholders in the development of an information literacy program
- Attempts to portray the continuum of change required for each of the stakeholders in the development of a new program
- Assumes that coordinator and librarian(s) work as partners with faculty and students to achieve recognized goals
Librarian subset: identifying a continuum for professional development

SWOT analysis: Librarians are trainers, not teachers

Literature review: Librarians must be teachers, not trainers
What is a trainer?

Someone who:

- Is expert in the use of a product or products e.g. a catalogue, a database
- Keeps up with product changes
- Is comfortable with technology
- Explains products to others
- Fulfils immediate user needs, i.e shows patron how to use product
- Can negotiate with patron to get needed resources (i.e. reference interview)
- Is task oriented
- Emphasizes concretes
- Is trained to not give opinions, advice, guidance

*Emphasis is on access to information, not the information itself.*
What is a teacher?

Someone who:

• works collaboratively with faculty to design IL integrated curriculum in their subject areas;
• prepares lesson plans with clearly identified learning outcomes;
• ensures that the learning outcomes are being met (assignments, etc.)
• is vigilant to the needs of learners’ different learning styles and capabilities,
• develops effective presentation skills, including expertise in using technological aids such as PowerPoint
• varies teaching methods to suit all learners;
• incorporates both web-based as well as traditional resources
• is proactive in identifying subject areas that call for IL program and initiate discussion with faculty to set up collaborative work to provide integrated IL program.

*Emphasis is on using & understanding information, not just accessing it*
Starting the voyage of development

http://vestrusvikingships.vikingagevessels.org/images/Islendingur.jpg
1. Find common ground

- Good communicators
- Good problem solvers
- Good negotiators (reference interview skills)
- Experience with technology
- Expertise with literature of the subject
- Committed to continuous improvement
2. Leave the safety of the harbour

• Move people out of their comfort zones
• Recognize that you can’t move people from trainer to teacher in one step
• Aim for **incremental** improvement to move librarians to from one stage to another
Example: Move from trainer to trainer/teacher (intermediate)

- Identify 1 or 2 achievable outcomes, e.g. Develop facility with Powerpoint
- Build on recognized staff strengths, e.g. Supplement good speaking skills with technology training & support
- Downplay weaker areas, e.g. Incorporate hands-on use of database for an assignment, instead of demonstrating database
- Identify and secure resources to accomplish development objectives, e.g. Take advantage of existing Powerpoint classes
Example: Move from trainer/teacher to teacher

- Identify 1 or 2 achievable outcomes, e.g. Prepare lesson plans with learning objectives

- Build on recognized staff strengths, e.g. Use knowledge of subject collection to develop course-appropriate learning outcomes

- Downplay weaker areas, e.g. Move from product-based teaching to linking products to curriculum

- Identify and secure resources to accomplish development objectives, e.g. Take advantage of existing teacher training programs (UTS)
Development model

- Identify achievable development outcomes.
- Identify and build on existing librarian strengths
- Identify and downplay/work with weaknesses
- Identify and secure resources to achieve outcomes
How do you measure success?

Not how close you are to the destination, but how far you are from the harbour
Thank you!