From the Classroom to the Breakout Room:
The Many Embedded Ways a Librarian Can Teach Information Literacy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Librarians embed themselves virtually and physically into courses to provide information literacy instruction. The COVID-19 pandemic had librarians swiftly shift their instruction practices and outreach to patrons, learning and using new technologies and teaching techniques. The goals of this chapter are to understand what embedded librarianship is and how it affects information literacy instruction, explore what instructional services an embedded librarian provided before the COVID-19 pandemic, describe adjustments to information literacy instruction as the classroom shifted to remote/hybrid format, and outline strategies to successfully deliver embedded information literacy instruction in the future.

INTRODUCTION

Librarians find various ways to create connections with the instructors and students they serve. One way to build deeper relationships that can strengthen instruction practices is through embedding virtually or physically into a class or entire course.

Embedded librarianship has a variety of definitions that vary in how librarians embed themselves and what the goals or expectations are for embedding into a course (Dewey, 2004; Schulte, 2012). This chapter will introduce what embedded librarianship is and then focus on how an instruction librarian is embedded within the departments she serves, how it affects the information literacy instruction provided to those departments, and what technologies she uses to provide information literacy instruction. Finally,

it will look at changes made due to the COVID-19 pandemic to allow her to continue embedding herself into various courses.

BACKGROUND

The examples of embedded librarianship in this chapter are from a science and math liaison librarian who works at a large, public research university that is primarily undergraduate students. As the liaison librarian to the College of Science and Math, she works with biology, chemistry and biochemistry, geology and environmental science, mathematics and statistics, and physics and astronomy. This college has a large emphasis on undergraduate research. She provides instruction on finding, evaluating, and using science information sources and consults with students and faculty about research and tools to manage research.

Embedded Librarianship

Dewey (2004) first coined the term embedded librarianship, inspired by the embedded journalists who attached to military units in war. Dewey explains that embedding is "a more comprehensive integration of one group with another to the extent that the group seeking to integrate is experiencing and observing, as nearly as possible, the daily life of the primary group." By having librarians intentionally integrated with other campus partners, "comprehensive collaborations" would be created (p. 6). Shumaker and Talley (2009) explained that embedded librarianship "involves focusing on the needs of one or more specific groups, building relationships with these groups, developing a deep understanding of their work, and providing information services that are highly customized and targeted to their greatest needs" (p. 9). To be an embedded librarian, one must immerse themselves in the areas they serve and collaborate with their patrons.

Different roles in the library can apply embedded librarianship to their practice. Embedded librarianship can also be virtual or in-person. Brower (2011) explains six characteristics of embedded librarianship: collaboration with patrons, partnerships with campus-level leadership, user-friendly services outside of the library, immersion into spaces and culture, making services convenient to patrons, and understanding the discipline. Over the years, academic librarians have described experiences being embedded into labs, lecture courses, intensive writing courses, and a discipline-specific residential college (Caminita, 2015; Ferrer-Vinent, 2016; Stephens et al., 2018; Young, 2021). Being embedded in a class or course provides a librarian with a better opportunity to understand the needs of the students and develop relationships with instructors.

Understanding the needs of one's instructors and students can take time. For a librarian to do this, it might include physically embedding themselves into spaces closer to their patrons and learning more about their culture and needs. To become physically embedded, librarians will go to spaces outside the library where their patrons can often be found. Some examples include drop-in office hours in department buildings, participating in departmental and committee meetings, or having a permanent office within the department building (Covone & Lamm, 2010; Freiburger & Kramer, 2009; O'Toole et al., 2016). These practices help embedded librarians develop a better understanding of their patrons' needs.

Embedded librarianship can also take place in a virtual setting, either synchronously or asynchronously. It is common for virtual embedded librarianship to take place within the learning management system. Librarians can monitor library topic discussion boards, create modules that include relevant and