



Academic and School Library Partnerships: An Organization–Led Collaboration

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study serves as a successful example of an external academic librarian-school librarian statewide partnership for other academic librarians in the United States to follow as they engage in outreach and marketing activities with high school students. A statewide partnership between a New Jersey academic librarian organization and a K-12 school librarian organization resulted in the formation of panels of New Jersey academic librarians who led virtual orientations to the academic library experience for New Jersey high school students. The virtual orientations to the academic library were developed to address students' feelings of anxiety when it comes to the academic library and to highlight the role that the academic library plays as a factor in the college choice of high school students. The success of the virtual library orientations held in October of 2021 will continue to influence future initiatives of the newly formed statewide partnership between academic librarians and school librarians in the state of New Jersey.

INTRODUCTION

The authors present this case study to share their experience as lead organizers in a multi-organizational statewide collaboration. The purpose of this collaboration was to bring academic librarians together as panelists with high school librarians as facilitators, providing educational learning opportunities where high school juniors and seniors were provided with college readiness tools. The challenges of developing a large-scale collaboration such as this were exacerbated by the ongoing limitations placed on educational institutions by the COVID-19 pandemic. This case study will provide background information on the primary organizations which led this collaboration, an overview of the state's educational environment and demographics, and extensive literature supporting the undertaking of the academic and school library partnership. The authors outline the initiative, including the logistical challenges, planning decisions, options not taken but considered, obtaining stakeholder buy-in, communicating, marketing the initiative, executing the panelist events, participant feedback, and plans to continue this successful initiative.

Organization Background

The New Jersey Library Association-College and University Section (NJLA-CUS) is the academic librarian subsection of the statewide New Jersey Library Association, an organization comprised of hundreds of public, school, academic, and special librarians throughout the state. NJLA-CUS simultaneously exists as the NJ Chapter of the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL-NJ), a statewide organization comprised of academic librarians from higher education institutions in New Jersey. NJLA-CUS/ACRL-NJ has a long history of supporting and participating in large-scale collaborations within the state and beyond. These include involvement in the New Jersey School Libraries Taskforce, advocacy for K-12 Information Literacy Legislation, and developing an International Social Media Directory for Academic Libraries.

The New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) is a statewide organization whose membership includes school librarians, educators, and media specialists in the K-12 education environment. NJASL advocates for strong school media programs in public, private, and parochial schools in New Jersey, provides countless resources to its over 800 members and leads collaborations throughout the state between schools, administrators, librarians, parents, and community members. Additionally, NJASL collaborates with other state and national organizations, such as LibraryLinkNJ, the New Jersey Library Association, the New Jersey State Library, and the American Association of School Librarians, to advocate for professionally staffed resource-rich school library programs for every student in New Jersey.

Educational Overview New Jersey

According to the New Jersey State Library, there are 51 academic libraries at 2- and 4-year public and private higher education institutions in the state of New Jersey (New Jersey College and University Library Systems, 2016). In K-12 education, there are 599 school districts with 512 secondary schools in New Jersey. The current New Jersey K-12 student enrollment consists of 1.28 million in public schools and 57,486 students in charter schools (New Jersey Department of Education, 2021). New Jersey is home to a remarkably diverse student population. K-12 students are: 40.7% White, 31.1% Hispanic, 15% African American, and 10.4% Asian (US Department of Education, 2021).

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