FROM GUEST LECTURER TO ASSIGNMENT CONSULTANT
Exploring A New Role for the Teaching Librarian

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The Premise

For many academic libraries, the library instruction session—whether taught on demand or integrated into targeted courses—is still the cornerstone of our information literacy programs.

Within our information literacy programs the instructional role of the librarian often remains limited to that of “guest lecturer.”

By rethinking this role and repositioning ourselves as consultants in assignment design, librarians can contribute to an array of deliverables more closely aligned with course goals and sharply honed to improve student learning of research processes and the information landscape.
Presentation Outline

- Librarian As Assignment Consultant
  A Theoretical Basis

- A Consultancy Framework
  UC Berkeley’s Undergraduate Research Initiative

- Barriers to Change
  Or the Challenge of Comfortable Assumptions

- Towards A Consultancy Practice
  Lessons on Partnering, Process and Facilitation Tools

- The Deliverables
  Examples from 3 Courses

- Conclusions and Audience Questions
The Librarian-Consultant: A Theoretical Basis

- The Information Consultant
  knows collections, discovery tools, search techniques

- The Assignment Consultant
  - knows learners – conceptual gaps that impede success, intuitive strategies that promote it
  - knowledge derived from interactions in reference & traditional instruction
  - knowledge complementary to that of classroom faculty
  - pedagogical nature of the contribution is central
A Consultancy Framework: Berkeley’s Undergraduate Research Initiative

“Library/Faculty Fellows for Undergraduate Research”
4-year grant (2003-2007) funded by Mellon Foundation

Objectives
- strengthen undergraduate preparation for research- or inquiry-based learning
- reinvigorate the large lecture course (enrollment > 100)
- nurture a cohort of faculty change agents

Means
- < 15 faculty members in each year of the grant
- a summer Institute to provide the framework
- an “Implementation Team” to assist faculty in course redesign

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A Consultancy Framework:
Berkeley’s Undergraduate Research Initiative

- The Summer Institute
  - a short “course”
  - curriculum designed by project partners (including Library...)
  - content provided framework for faculty to
    - reflect on students and research
    - redesign syllabi to incorporate research-based modes of learning
    - anticipate the kind of support they might expect from “I-Teams”

- The Implementation Team (“I-team”)
  - members drawn from project partner units
  - composed of librarian, educational technologist, GSI Center staff, assessment specialist
Barriers to Change: Or the Challenge of Comfortable Assumptions

- Role-related assumptions
  - librarians sought for collections & search expertise
  - little reason for faculty to expect deeper, pedagogically-informed support

- Assumptions related to “teaching and learning structures”
  - “teaching = telling,” “teaching = lecturing”
  - lecture as the means of conveying expertise

- Librarian challenges
  - avoid reproducing the pedagogy of the one-shot
  - re-shape faculty expectations of librarian’s contribution
  - articulate alternatives to the lecture
  - articulate alternatives to the 50-min., classroom-based package in which instruction is delivered

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Towards a Consultancy Practice: Partnering & Process

- Partnering
  - Importance of synergy among I-team members
  - The Library and the Graduate Student Instructor Teaching & Resource Center (GSI Center)

- Process
  - Partners: Distinct professional backgrounds, frames of reference, divergent ways of communicating and approaching problems
  - Time a finite resource
Towards a Consultancy Practice: Tools for the Consultant’s Toolkit

- **Written documents**
  - Shared in advance of meetings
  - Facilitate productive discussion, mutual understanding
  - ...are not “contracts”

- **“Assignment Design Proposal”**
  - Demonstrates grasp of faculty member’s learning goals
  - Identifies benefits to student learning
  - Points to established principles of good practice
  - Highlights pedagogical nature of librarian support

- **“Implementation Plan”**
  - Outlines practical details of instructional delivery
  - Delineates roles and responsibilities of all persons involved
The Deliverables

- Learner-centered reconceptualization of assignments
  - Focus on end product shifts
  - Learning experience, structures and resources that facilitate the experience are in the foreground

- Embracing consultancy: beyond the guest lecture
  - “Inverted classroom” strategies (Platt and Lage): students’ first exposure to content occurs outside lecture hall
  - Benefits:
    - Students have more responsibility for learning
    - Higher degree of engagement with material than allowed in large lecture environment
    - Heightens student preparedness for subsequent discussion
    - Provides more opportunities for feedback and assessment

- Examples
Conclusions: Benefits of Consultancy Model

- **Shared Implementation**
  - Erases counterproductive boundary between “library piece” and other course work
  - Broadens ownership of “information literacy,” establishing roles for course instructor, librarian, and GSIs (who are future faculty, after all)
  - Allows librarians to model learner-centered approaches that faculty can make their own

- **Focus on Assignment Design**
  - Builds repertoire of activities and materials that can be re-used, refined, adapted with less effort in subsequent semesters
  - Extends principles of good practice in undergraduate instruction to research assignments
  - Lends itself to better assessment: activities = evidence

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