The Expanding Role of the Academic Liaison:
Balancing Subject v. Functional Skills

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Speakers

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Agenda

1. Welcome & introductions
2. Nature of liaison roles (Marla)
3. In smaller libraries (Richard)
4. In larger libraries (Steve)
5. Discussion
Poll

Liaisons present?
- Subject
- Functional
- Both

Have you discussed the balance and/or organization of subject v. functional roles in your library?
2. Nature of liaison roles (Marla)
Introduction

*Fundamentals for the Academic Liaison* by Richard Moniz, Jo Henry, and Joe Eshleman

The nature of librarian liaison work and their evolving roles...
Defining the Library Liaison

• Liaisons provide service in a particular subject area or a particular function.
• “The job of the academic library liaison has altered greatly from the bibliographic specialist of the 1940s into its current, diversified role” (183)
• More emphasis on engagement?
Subject Specific Skills

• Serving the needs of the particular academic department/unit
• Collection management
• Teaching and research support
• Building personal relationships
Functional Skills

- Data curation
- Scholarly communication
- Information literacy
- Distance education
- Copyright assistance
- And *advocacy* for the above
Liaisons in Small vs. Large Libraries

Smaller:
- Liaisons evolved to provide wide array of liaison roles
- May be limited ability to specialize due to more tasks
- Communication & organization maybe be easier

Larger:
- Multiple library liaisons specializing in certain roles
- May be more focused on one subject area or functional role
- Communication & organization could be more challenging
Diversified Role: Evolution of the Liaison

• Outreach
• The Embedded Librarian
• Relationship building with faculty
  o in person, newsletters, phone, email
• (Co)Teaching
Diversified Role: Evolution of the Liaison

Technology:
- Keeping skills up to date, ex. tools for marketing
- The Personal Librarian
- Hardware and software (exs. e-readers, tablets, Prezi)
- Libguides, blogs, wikis, social networks
Liaisons as Promoters

The constant need to prove the worth of libraries to people deciding the future of libraries (rarely librarians themselves)

Building positive opinions of the library as a place and as people through subject and functional roles
3. Subject v. Functional in Smaller Libraries (Richard)
Johnson & Wales University, Charlotte

- Founded as a business college in 1914 in Providence, RI
- Not-for-profit, private institution
- School of Business, School of Hospitality, College of Culinary Arts, and College of Arts & Sciences
- Four Campuses: Providence, RI; Charlotte, NC; Miami, FL; Denver, CO
- Approximately 2,200 students at our Charlotte campus (opened in 2004)
- Approximately 120 faculty (very few adjuncts)
Johnson & Wales University Library

- 6 librarians (2 part-time)
- Focused physical collections
- HELIN consortium member
- NEASC accredited
- Personal Librarian program
- **Subject-oriented but hybrid liaisons**
Jean Moats

- Culinary Arts and Baking/Pastry collections
- Periodicals collection
- General reference assistance on any topic
- Assistance with faculty research
- Library instruction classes
- Copyright assistance
- Overall collection management
- Assistance with programs
- Creating and updating subject specific library research guides

Richard Moniz

- Arts & Sciences collections
- General reference assistance on any topic
- Copyright assistance
- Assistance with reserves
- JWU Scholars Archive
- Assistance with faculty research
- Any general questions or concerns about library policies
- Library instruction classes

Valerie Freeman

- Business and Hospitality Collections
- Percolator collection
- General reference assistance on any topic
- Assistance with reserves
- Assistance with faculty research
- Library instruction classes (primary contact for all programs)
- uresearch assistance

Justin Herman

- General reference assistance on any topic
- Assistance with textbooks and reserves
- Assistance with faculty research
Andrea Kincaid
• General reference assistance on any topic
• Assistance with faculty research
• Assistance with LibGuides

Kat Oosterhuis
• General reference assistance on any topic
• Assistance with faculty research
• Assistance with LibGuides

Karen Mann
• Instructional Technology
Opportunity?

“Promotion of an array of newer services, such as consultations on data management plans for grant writing, digital repositories and preservation, and scholarly communication, may expand perceptions of library services beyond traditional roles of collection development, reference service, library orientation, and issues resolution.”

(Pasek, 2015)
4. Subject v. Functional in Larger Libraries (Steve)
The Arizona Experiment
in subject v. functional liaisoning
University of Arizona Libraries timeline: part 1

1991: Hired Carla Stoffle as dean
- Library budget was in steep decline
- Got smaller through attrition to boost salaries

1993: Reorganized whole library into teams
- Flattened the structure; reduced administrative overhead
- **Subject liaisons** in subject teams (ex. Humanities)

2005-08: New funding model for UA units

2008: Ended traditional subject liaison model; **functional teams only**
2008: functional teams only

Instructional Services Team (IST)

Research Support Services Team (RSST)
  • “Collections, communication, and digital initiatives”

Undergraduate Services Team (UST)
  • “Coordination, prioritization and production of learning objects and the design of educational materials for use both in the classroom and online.”
By 2010, a realization:

“The [2008] change was not communicated well to departments. Many faculty members had been used to contacting one librarian for a whole suite of services. Now they were uncertain who to contact, or had multiple contacts for different functions.”

“Over the next couple of years, it became clear that the library was losing connections with faculty and students, and some adjusting of this model was needed.”

(2013 SLA paper)
UA timeline: part 2

2010: Changes in response:
• RSST work moved to new Scholarly Publishing & Data Management Team
• Created a Research Services Team (RST) to coordinate communication & assess campus needs

2011: An assessment finding (among others):
• “The library must continue to engage with key faculty. Face-to-face communication is the most direct way to engage our customers.”

2013: Dean Stoffle retires; Dean Williams hired

2015: Subject liaisons return, based in the new Research & Learning Team (15 people)
• Teams replaced with “units” (departments)
Geography

We designed this research guide to introduce you to the field of geography. You'll find the materials, search tools, and other resources you need to start your research.

Encyclopedias & dictionaries

The Dictionary of Human Geography
The definitive guide to the concepts and debates in human geography. Includes clear, critical, and constructive surveys of key terms by leading researchers in the field.

Encyclopedia of Human Geography
Offers a comprehensive overview of the major ideas, concepts, terms, and approaches that characterize a diverse field.

The Dictionary of Physical Geography
Covers the whole field of physical geography and provides an essential reference for all students and lecturers in this field.
From RST’s 2010-11 assessment*:

“There were immediate benefits simply from making the personal connections with faculty. Many faculty members expressed how grateful they were that librarians were reaching out to them and were happy to now have a connection in the library.”

*reported in the 2013 SLA paper
UNCG version
Functional teams
Liaisons from each subject team plus other librarians & staff

- Scholarly Communications Team
- Instruction Team
- Reference Desk Team
- Social Science Team
- Humanities Team
- Natural Science Team
- Collections Team
Arizona sources

Bender, L. J. (1997). Team organization—learning organization: the University of Arizona four years into it. *Information Outlook*, 1(9), 19-22. (in Proquest/NC LIVE)


“Joining the University of Arizona Libraries & Center for Creative Photography: A Team-Based Organization Unlike Any Other” (2009, April) [http://www.library.arizona.edu/about/employment/documents/JoiningLibraryPacket0409.doc](http://www.library.arizona.edu/about/employment/documents/JoiningLibraryPacket0409.doc)


And I looked closely at its web site in September 2015 and interviewed the R&L unit head on the phone two weeks ago.


https://liaisonlife.wordpress.com/ (Steve’s blog on liaison issues)
5. Discussion of experiences & best practices