Connecting Agricultural Information with Learning and Teaching of Students and the Community

Katherine O’Clair
Agriculture and Environmental Sciences Librarian, Kennedy Library

Benali Burgoa
Asst. Professor, BioResource and Ag Engineering Dept.

CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN LUIS OBISPO
A Collaborative Effort

- Ag Ambassadors
  Faculty Advisor
  – Ben Burgoa

- College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) Librarian
  – Katherine O’Clair

- Non-traditional Approach to Library Instruction
Ag Ambassadors

- Undergraduate and Graduate Students in CAFES
  - 50 Students from all Departments and Majors in the College
    - Average length of service is 2 years
- Started at Cal Poly in 1988.
- Faculty Advisors
  - Ben Burgoa
  - Bob Cummings
- A service organization sponsored by and working for CAFES.
Ag Ambassadors

- Mission of the Ag Ambassadors at Cal Poly
  - Encouraging high school and junior college students to pursue higher education
  - Cultivating individuals in their pursuit of agriculture as a career and lifestyle
  - Sharing the multitude of opportunities Cal Poly’s College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences offers
Ag Ambassador Activities

• Give tours of campus agricultural facilities to prospective students and the public.
• Engage in education and outreach efforts by visiting schools and agriculture shows and events.
• Serve as the Public Relations Branch of the College.
Our Goals

• Faculty Advisor
  – Help students stay current on agriculture issues in California and the Nation
  – Help students develop strategies for lifelong learning in support of Cal Poly’s University Learning Objectives

• CAFES Librarian
  – Increase awareness of resources available
  – Provide resources for outreach and education activities that could be used to pass on information within the community
  – Build relationships with CAFES Students
What We Did

• CAFES Librarian created and developed Ag Ambassadors Info Portal
  – Used Springshare’s LibGuides platform
• Held one of the regular weekly meetings in the Library Computer Lab
  – 23 students attended at 7am in the morning
• Library paid for continental breakfast
• Surveyed students about their information needs and information seeking strategies
• Introduced students to the Info Portal
Survey Results

• Information Seeking Strategies and Needs (n=21)
  – Generally talk to others (students, faculty, staff) or look for information on the Internet as they prepare for their Ag Ambassador activities.
  – Generally go to the Departments and/or their Web sites, as well as Internet, to look for information.
  – Most (86%) said they would use resources provided by the library.
Survey Results

• Post-Session Evaluation (n=9)
  – All respondents said the web resources would be useful. Those specifically mentioned include:
    • National Agricultural Statistics Service
    • National Agricultural Library
    • Ag in the Classroom
  – All but one respondent indicated they would use the Info Portal.
  – Comments:
    • “This is a fascinating site! I love all the information you have put together. It will be helpful not only as an Ag Ambassador, but also as a CAFES student! Thanks so much!”
    • “I learned there is so much information out there on the Internet that will be helpful to me as an Ag Ambassador. And now in a tight neat package I’d be very willing to use it.”
Outcomes of Our Efforts

• Measureable Evidence
  – Limited use of Info Portal
    • Usage statistics

• Anecdotal Evidence
  – Increased awareness of the Library
    • Student Assistant
  – Increased interaction with the CAFES Librarian
    • Office Hours in Department
    • Facebook
    • Invitations to Student Activities
Strategies for the Future

• Integrate Ag Ambassador information and materials into the Info Portal
  – Post Ag Ambassadors schedule and documents on the Portal
  – Increase exposure to quality information resources and materials

• Offer Information Sessions at the regular meetings each fall at the beginning of the academic year and as needed throughout the year

• Recruit Ag Ambassadors to share information about the Portal with others
Conclusions

• Investing in the future
  – We’re planting seeds
  – Students may not use information immediately, but might remember it in a moment of need
  – Continue to offer sessions, encourage use and employ word of mouth marketing - never quit trying
Questions or Comments?

• Katherine O’Clair
  – Agriculture and Environmental Sciences Librarian
  • koclar@calpoly.edu

• Ben Burgoa
  – Ag Ambassador Faculty Advisor
  – BioResource and Agricultural Engineering Department
  • bburgoa@calpoly.edu