

Slide 1

Community and Collaboration: Embedding the Agriculture Librarian in a First-Year Residential College

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Librarian in Search of an Embed Opportunity

September 2011 – delivered a one shot/library intro session to AGRI 1001, which is designed like a college success skills course but focused specifically on the needs of students within the College of Agriculture

Contact and rapport established with the Agriculture Residential College rector/Associate Dean of Student Services

Instructor librarians at LSU have taught a one-hour credit course, LIS 1001, for over 50 years.

As an instruction librarian at LSU, my responsibilities include teaching one shots and LIS 1001, a one-credit-hour course that orients students to LSU Libraries and introduces them to information literacy concepts such as critically evaluating information sources. Librarians have delivered this course to LSU students for the past 50 years. Until the Fall of 2011, LIS 1001 was a required course for all undergraduate degrees offered by the Manship School of Mass Communication and the Department of Communication and Speech Disorders. When the Manship School removed the LIS 1001 requirement from its curricula, instruction librarians suddenly found themselves actively recruiting students to enroll in the course.

I saw this crisis as an opportunity after delivering a library introduction one shot to AGRI 1001, a college success skills course that focuses specifically on the needs of freshman in the College of Agriculture. I met the instructor of AGRI 1001 and learned that she was the rector of LSU's Agricultural Residential College (ARC).

The Residential Colleges at LSU

The Residential Colleges were established in 2007

The Agriculture Residential College started in 2008

"The mission of the LSU Residential Colleges Program – a partnership between Residential Life and the [LSU Office of Academic Affairs](#) – is to provide a seamless living-learning environment for first-year students and to foster the development of three core outcomes: critical thinking ability, communication skills, and sense of community and social responsibility. This is achieved through student interaction with faculty and other freshmen beyond the boundaries of the more traditional classroom setting."



I approached the rector with a question: would LIS 1001 be a good fit for students participating in ARC?

Let me give you a bit of background on the residential colleges at LSU and why I felt LIS 1001 would be a good fit for ARC. The Residential Colleges were established in 2007 as part of LSU's QEP. ARC was formed in 2008. The residential colleges have specific goals and objectives related to increasing student retention:

- Fostering critical thinking ability
- Fostering communication skills
- Fostering a sense of community and social responsibility

Students who participate in the residential colleges are blocked scheduled and are usually enrolled in course pairs (Freshman Composition and AGRI 1001, for example).

They live in Blake Hall, the dormitory for ARC.

They take Agriculture-related field trips (to Research Stations, the Farmers Market, the Angola Rodeo).

When I explained that information literacy was an approach to critical thinking, the ARC rector was very excited about incorporating LIS 1001 into ARC's goals and objectives.

The Embedding Opportunity

3 elements of embedded librarianship

1. Ongoing working relationships
2. Knowledge of and commitment to information user-group goals and objectives
3. Highly customized and value-added contributions to the group



So how does this project fit with the concept of librarian embedding? The term “embedded librarian” lacks a comprehensive and cohesive definition. Embedding is largely defined by the academic library and the resources it can devote to outreach and instruction.

For my purposes, the best way to explain my information literacy instruction goals and my outreach/liaison goals for the ARC project is David Shumaker’s 3-part functional framework for embedding librarians. The framework consists of 3 complementary and overlapping elements:

- The embedded librarian seeks out and maintains ongoing working relationships with a working group
- The embedded librarian attains and maintains knowledge of and commitment to information user-group goals and objectives
- The embedded librarian provides highly customized and value-added contributions to the group.

I will use this framework to describe how I perform these embedded librarian functions with ARC and within the College of Agriculture as a whole.

1. Ongoing Working Relationships

Burger Bash Fall 2012 – Welcome Party and contact opportunity with student organizations, new students, faculty, staff, Research Station and Cooperative Extension faculty and staff



ARC is a team effort. Faculty from disciplines within the College of Agriculture teach courses and assist with student advising and scheduling. As an instructor within ARC, I participate on ARC committees, attend College of Agriculture events, and participated in ARC events and field trips. These activities keep me aware of the changing needs of faculty and students and allow me to respond and adapt quickly.

2. Knowledge of and commitment to user group goals and objectives

The 2012/2013 ARC Cohort

My first group of ARC students enrolled in LIS 1001 in conjunction with other courses



Understanding the goals and objectives of ARC serves as the foundation of the LIS 1001 course I developed for ARC students. For the spring 2014 semester, I designed LIS 1001 to support the ARC semester project. The semester project required student groups to research an agriculture-related social justice issue. Students prepared a grant proposal document in which they identified a social justice problem in the Baton Rouge area and a target population for intervention, demonstrated the effectiveness of similar interventions through citing the published research, and prepared a budget in the amount of \$10,000 to support their project goals and objectives. Students then created videos to promote their projects. All goals and objectives for LIS 1001 focused on supporting the various elements of the semester project and included activities such as using the US Census to identify target populations and researching the published scholarly literature to identify projects that could serve as models.

3. Highly customized and value-added contributions to the group

Visit to a research station – Idlewild Station in Clinton, LA, September 2013



Some examples of customized and value-added contributions to the ARC group include:

- Maintaining office hours in the ARC residence hall
- Providing instructional support and research lab time for the ARC Freshman writing courses
- Creating subject guides and tutorials to address the specific information needs of ARC students. For example, I created a resources and reading list of social justice issues to make students aware of the vast variety of projects that have been created to address issues such as food deserts, feral cat populations, and overcrowding in animal shelters.

Reciprocal Benefits

Visit to the Aquaculture Research Station, April 2013



I've briefly described what is obviously a great deal of work. But the reciprocal benefits are work the investment of time and effort. By working with ARC and establishing relationships with the College of Agriculture faculty and LSU AgCenter extension and research station faculty, I've pursued a number of projects and activities that have demonstrated the value of LSU Libraries to my liaison areas:

- I've taught a 4-H summer camp workshop with a colleague in the College of Agriculture's Vice President's office
- I've worked the LSU Agcenter Communications team to research and then premiere LSU's Smith-Lever Centennial Documentary
- I've visited research stations – something that was not extensively done by previous agriculture librarians at LSU.
- I've designed online information literacy embedding for a Human Nutrition course.
- I am ready to assist with the implementation of LSU's current QEP, LSU Discover, which focuses on creating and supporting opportunities for undergraduate research.
- I've presented at the College of Agriculture Dean's Teaching Conference twice.

Opportunities for Contact, Research, Growth

Presentations at the 2013 and 2014 College of Agriculture Dean's Teaching Conference



I've presented at the College of Agriculture Dean's Teaching Conference twice, both in response to faculty concerns about student learning and University decisions that could potentially impact teaching and learning:

- 2013: scaffolding research assignments to discourage plagiarism, in response to LSU's adoption of Turn It In
- 2014: information literacy as an approach to critical thinking

Lessons Learned

When relationships end for any number of reasons

Goals and objectives need to be explicitly stated early in the planning stages with embedding of this scale

With changes in leadership come changes in direction/focus



So what happens when change occurs, as it inevitably will? How can you maintain relationships and keep momentum when change—the only constant—presents challenges?

There have been challenges on the journey so far, and there are new challenges on the horizon.

Relationships are key to this type of embedding. When a relationship ends, for whatever reason, the dynamic among the group changes. The current rector of ARC is leaving LSU. Her knowledge, experience, influence, and authority is also leaving LSU. I believe that this upcoming academic year will be a rebuilding year.

Without explicitly documented goals and objectives and assignments of responsibilities, the embedded librarian may end up teaching sections of classes and doing work that is probably best done by others. This is a common theme in the embedding literature but has not been thoroughly investigated. I am interested in investigating this issue.

Changes in leadership bring changes in focus and direction. The College of Agriculture now has a new VP who is refocusing efforts on recruitment. LSU Libraries just received news of its new Dean. Where this embedding experiment fits into the new Dean's vision is unknown.

Selected Reading

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Thank you! Please let me know if you have any questions.