

## **Bibliographic Instruction of Off-campus Students Using Local Area Libraries**

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One of the goals of Central Michigan University's Off-campus Library Services (CMU, OCLS) is to provide bibliographic instruction; "instruct users about systematic methods of identifying, retrieving, and using information" (Central Michigan University, Off-campus Library Services, 1988). Over the years the CMU off-campus librarians have made a concerted effort to provide bibliographic instruction to as many CMU off-campus students and faculty as possible, to assist in their use of library resources, as well as to market the library services.

It has been stated in the library literature that the type of bibliographic instruction most favored by users is point-of-use instruction, which strengthens user confidence by addressing immediate needs on site (Peyton, 1982). CMU's Off-campus Library Services setting is mainly decentralized, apart from the main campus library, thereby requiring the use of local libraries and referral agencies to provide point-of-use bibliographic instruction. The Michigan Metropolitan (MIMET) region of CMU's Off-campus Library Services has utilized several local libraries for the provision of bibliographic instruction for the MSA 600, Administrative Research Report Method course.

This paper will examine the outcome of resource sharing through the bibliographic instruction sessions provided by CMU librarians for CMU off-campus students, at local area libraries.

### **Background**

Central Michigan University Extended Degree Programs offers both undergraduate and graduate courses in approximately 55 centers throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. Seven professional librarians work with off-campus students and faculty to provide reference and referral assistance, and bibliographic instruction.

The MIMET Region offers courses to approximately 3,000 off-campus students in the Detroit metropolitan area. Two off-campus librarians located in Troy, Michigan, work exclusively with the MIMET students.

In January, 1990, the MIMET region began to offer MSA 600, a course in administrative and research methods as a prerequisite to the core courses for the Master of Science in Administration (MSA) degree. The course is designed to acquaint students with research processes and tools used in selecting and developing a problem, project, or issue for analysis. The course is the precursor for the final integrative project for the MSA curriculum, MSA 685. The course methodology includes lecture, discussion, and group work for the development of working research proposals and instruments. The fourth class session is comprised of reviewing the literature...library resources and procedures. It is during this class session that a CMU librarian provides a bibliographic instruction session.

The CMU OCLS librarians worked as a group to create a bibliographic instruction module for the MSA 600 course. The CMU MIMET librarians contacted local librarians to acquire permission to use their facilities to present the module. The local librarians approached were all acquaintances

or colleagues of the MIMET librarians, which increased the chances of acceptance. In addition, the CMU MIMET administrators advised that interactions be limited to local libraries whose institutions and programs were not in direct competition with CMU's extended degree programs. MSA 600 bibliographic instruction sessions were scheduled for two and one half hour intervals at the Troy Public Library for Troy Center students, at the Henry Ford Community College Library in Dearborn, and the Schoolcraft College Library in nearby Livonia for Dearborn Center students, and at the Mott Community College Library, and the Flint Public Library for the Flint Center students. Sessions were held during the evenings when the local librarians expected the least amount of local library patrons. Each library provided a conference room for lecture/ demonstrations and question/answer periods, and the use of the reference section for the hands-on use of card catalogs, indexes and abstracts, electronic sources, and specialized reference sources such as Statistical Abstracts, and The Encyclopedia of Associations. Sources that were not owned by the local library were provided by the CMU librarians.

The goal of the sessions was to assist the students in creating the beginnings of a bibliography which could be used for the research project proposals compiled in the MSA 600 class. Students were given handouts which included work sheets to use in conjunction with the demonstrations and hands-on library exercises. During the demonstrations and library exercises, students were cautioned that the local library may not hold "everything" on their topic due to the curriculum or community supported, but were still encouraged to try. Fortunately, each of the libraries subscribed to the basic indexes such as Business Periodicals Index, and Social Sciences Index, and Infotrac; and were members of consortiums thereby allowing students to locate books on their topic through card catalog networks.

Students were also given evaluation forms which were collected at the end of the sessions for immediate feedback. Additional responses to the library sessions which were given on the instructor's end-of-course evaluation were forwarded to the librarians. As the number of MSA 600 classes increased, and the number of students per class also increased, it became difficult to schedule all of the bibliographic instruction sessions in local libraries. Some of the sessions were held in the CMU off-campus classrooms, while others remained in the local libraries. The hands-on use of the card catalog was obviously eliminated; instead the use of on-line catalogs was emphasized with specific instruction on the use of CMU's on-line catalog, CENTRA. Copies of indexes, abstracts, and specialized sources were brought to the classrooms for hands-on use. At a later date, students from both the local library and classroom bibliographic instruction sessions received another evaluation form, thus allowing the librarians to compare the sessions.

### Outcome

Overall, local librarians, colleagues, and local library patrons were very accepting of CMU's bibliographic instruction sessions in the local libraries. The host librarians were extremely cooperative and even offered to assist in the sessions. Local library patrons appeared interested in the sessions. During the hands-on exercises, several patrons mistook the CMU librarians for local librarians and asked for library assistance. The colleagues of the local librarians seemed intrigued; however, in one case, a local librarian had not informed his colleagues of the CMU visit, nor was the colleague aware of CMU's off-campus library service. The colleague expressed her displeasure that CMU would "take advantage" of her library's collection.

Most of the CMU MSA 600 instructors are adjunct from the fields of business and education. The instructors valued the bibliographic instruction sessions whether they were in the library or the classroom setting. It was noted that a two and one half hour block of time away from their lecture was welcomed by most and disdained by a few. In fact, midway one of the sessions, one instructor asked that the librarian "cut it short!" However, two of the instructors who are professors at area

colleges insist that the sessions continue in the local libraries regardless of the sizes of the classes, and the dates available.

Many of the MSA 600 instructors try to convey knowledge useful to the final integrative project in the proposal writing done in the MSA 600 class. They feel that the library sessions are valuable in assisting the students in the beginning preparation of the literature review needed for the integrative project. The instructors have also commented that they have "learned a few things" from the bibliographic instruction sessions.

Student responses were also favorable. Evaluations of the bibliographic instruction sessions in the library compared to the classroom sessions were evenly divided, even though written comments seemed to favor the library setting. Students felt that the wide variety of resources available in the library such as Infotrac made the library sessions more beneficial. They also commented that becoming familiar with the location of resources in the library was another advantage. "The visual reinforcement of the library setting leads to the understanding and familiarity of the research process. This familiarity makes one more comfortable in returning to the library setting."

Comments in favor of the classroom setting included closer interaction with fellow students, the ability to hear the questions and answers during the hands-on library exercises, the convenience of attending the session in one's own classroom, the familiarity of the classroom setting which is more conducive to open discussion.

Additional favorable comments included requests that the sessions be held earlier in the class, and for more practice time.

The only unfavorable comments consisted of problems with parking, the feeling that a great deal of class time was wasted on concepts that should have been learned at the undergraduate level, the long length of the sessions, and "stolen class time."

### Summary

CMU off-campus students found the use of the local libraries for bibliographic instruction very beneficial. Their evaluation comments mainly focused on the content of the sessions rather than the location. The information acquired in the MSA 600 was useful in their research experiences in other courses, but particularly for the literature review for the final integrative project.

The initial information provided by the MSA 600 instructors seemed to play a role in setting the tone of the expectations of the students, as well as in their attitude about its importance. Many preconceived impressions and library/librarian stereotypes were erased.

Kelly, in her discussion of library privileges for off-campus faculty and students has stated that local libraries have a professional obligation to serve as a means of encouraging reciprocity in resource sharing (Kelly, 1988). CMU's use of local libraries for bibliographic instruction for its off-campus students has thus far proven to be successful, as displayed by its students and extremely cooperative local library colleagues.

### References

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