

## Off-Campus Faculty Perception of the Value of Library User Education

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During the summer of 1993, a user evaluation survey was administered to Central Michigan University Extended Degree Program graduates in the Detroit Metropolitan area (MIMET), who had completed the Master of Science in Administration (MSA) degree program the previous year. The findings of the survey were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of library user instruction and the value of the library use component to successful completion of assignments in subsequent courses and the final integrative project.

According to the results of the survey, the students felt that library user instruction was effective and useful to the completion of course assignments and the final project. To build upon a program that was positively received by our off-campus students, it was recommended that we conduct a survey of the off-campus faculty perception of the value of library instruction to augment the findings of this study.

This paper will discuss the findings of a user evaluation survey which was administered to the Central Michigan University Off-Campus faculty in the Detroit Metropolitan area (MIMET), to determine their perception of the value of the library user instruction component, and their recommendations for improvements.

### BACKGROUND

Central Michigan University Extended Degree Programs (EDP), offers both undergraduate and graduate courses in approximately 50 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 library use instruction.

The provision of library use instruction is one of the major functions of Off-Campus Library Services (OCLS) as outlined in the Mission and Goals statement (Central Michigan University 1988). During fiscal year 1993-1994, OCLS Librarians provided library use instruction to 3,614 students in 157 classes program-wide (1,293 students in 51 classes in the MIMET area).

Off-campus Librarians also provide library services such as preparation of library bibliographies, textbook and publisher information, and database searching to off-campus faculty.

There are approximately 360 off-campus faculty in the MIMET area comprised of CMU on-campus faculty, faculty from other colleges and universities, public officials, practicing specialists, and leaders in business and industry.

Before the start of each semester, OCLS Librarians in the MIMET area review course outlines and

contact the appropriate faculty to plan class visits for the provision of a library use instruction session. The majority of the faculty are very receptive to this request. Oftentimes a pattern is established in which the scheduled date of a "librarian visit" is permanently listed as one of the class sessions in the course outline as in the case of the "core" course, "MSA 600: Administrative and Research Methods."

The primary instructional methods used to conduct the library use instruction components was described in detail in "Off-Campus Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of Library User Education" (Craig and Schultz 1993).

Fiscal year 1994-1995 marked a turning point in the mode of library use instruction utilized by the OCLS Librarians. Library use instruction sessions began to incorporate the use of technology, consisting of a laptop computer with a modem, and an LCD data display panel connected to an overhead projector. This allowed the students and faculty to view a live dial-in demonstration of the Central Michigan University Library Information System. Unfortunately, the use of the new technologically advanced library use instruction component was limited in the MIMET area due to a decrease in staff. Library use instruction was provided on a very limited basis, and promotional literature was provided as a substitute. Many of the faculty had not received the technologically enhanced version of the library use instruction component when the survey was administered.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Several surveys have been conducted to assess faculty attitudes or perceptions of library instruction; however, only a few of them address off-campus library services or adjunct faculty. In her study of lecturers' attitudes to library skills at the University of South Africa, Behrens describes numerous obstacles to distance learning which have a direct bearing on the learning of library skills. These obstacles include faculty awareness of the role of library skills in independent learning, student and faculty workload and time needed for additional library research beyond the compulsory study package, and faculty's knowledge of library skills. "It is apparent that faculty had not given the matter much thought." (Behrens 1993, 11-23).

Among Maynard's survey responses of faculty attitudes toward library instruction at The Citadel, less than 2% were adjunct faculty, (Maynard 1990) and Thomas suggested that part-time faculty were less aware of library services than full-time faculty at California State University, Long Beach (Thomas 1984). Nonetheless, many of the overall responses to their surveys are applicable to this study.

A common theme in much of the literature was the faculty's own experiences in learning to use the library and the frequency of faculty library use. Cannon found that faculty who had to learn library research skills on their own were less likely to provide library instruction and assumed their students would learn the same way, while those who used the library more often were more likely to provide library instruction (Cannon 1994).

In a follow-up study on faculty attitudes and habits concerning library instruction at California State University, Long Beach, Thomas found that faculty seem to feel little responsibility for assuring that their students develop library skills; however a large number of full professors believe that students learn library skills on their own, and that this belief drops as rank drops (Thomas 1994).

#### THE SURVEY

The survey consisted of eighteen questions using the Likert Scale model. Questions one through five involved demographic information. Question number six asked how the faculty learned library skills as a student. Questions seven through eighteen focused on faculty perception of library user instruction.

Two hundred seventy-eight surveys were mailed to current CMU off-campus graduate and undergraduate faculty in the MIMET area who teach courses which possibly had received a library use instruction presentation. (i.e., faculty teaching quantitative courses were excluded.) The survey packet included a cover letter, survey and return postage paid envelope.

## RESULTS

One hundred and seventeen surveys (42%) were returned. Of those returned, 75 (64%) were from graduate faculty, 40 (34%) were from undergraduate faculty, 2 (2%) were unusable.

The undergraduate faculty responses showed that 5% had taught for CMU one year, 11% two years, 12% three years, 7% four years, and 65% five years or more. Seventy percent of the undergraduate faculty were male; 30% were female. The average undergraduate faculty respondent taught one management course per year.

The graduate faculty responses showed that 13% had taught for CMU one year, 4% two years, 5% three years, 9% four years, and 69% five or more years. Eight-six percent were male; 11% females: 2 did not respond. The average graduate faculty respondent taught four administration courses per year.

The majority of the faculty learned library skills as a student "on their own." Seventeen graduate faculty and four undergraduate faculty indicated that they had learned library skills through a research course. The remainder of the responses included "grade or high school," "various courses requiring research," "prior experience," and "taught graduate research methods class."

Seventy-one percent of undergraduate faculty required the use of library service/materials to complete one or more course assignments. Only 42% of undergraduate faculty indicated that they offered library instruction to their students. In answer to what kind of library instruction is provided, 8 undergraduate faculty chose instructor conducts library instruction, 11 indicated instruction from CMU Librarian, no one indicated a visit to the local library, 11 chose none, and other responses included "library promotional materials," "handouts/packets from the library," "discussion on library data provided to the class," and "make students aware of information available."

Eighty-four percent of graduate faculty required the use of library service/materials to complete one or more course assignments. Only 35% of graduate faculty responded that they offered library instruction to their students. Ten chose instructor conducts library instruction, 23 indicated instruction from CMU Librarian, three indicated a visit to the local library, 25 chose other, and 10 indicated none. Comments included "discuss research procedures," "library handout," "encourage to use library services," "extensive literature review and practice."

Due to a decrease in staff in OCLS in the MIMET area, library use instruction was provided on a very limited basis, and promotional literature was provided as a substitute. Many of the faculty did not receive a library use instruction presentation during the time that the survey was administered.

When asked if their students used the off-campus library services, an overall majority of both groups indicated yes. However, the undergraduate faculty were split 50% yes and 50% no when asked if there was a difference in the completed assignments of the students who use the library services and the students who do not. Sixty-one percent of graduate faculty indicated yes, that there was a difference in the completed assignments of students who used the library services.

Of the faculty who did receive a library use instruction presentation in their classes, the majority of both groups strongly agreed that it was useful in the completion of student's course assignments. Both

groups also strongly agreed that the methods of presentation used in the library use instruction component were effective in the teaching of library skills, the amount of time spent on the library presentation was just right, and the students were able to utilize the instructional materials distributed during the presentation. Faculty responded that they were satisfied with the library instruction that their classes had received. When asked if the library presentation should be a required component, a majority of both groups answered "strongly agree" or "agree;" two graduate faculty answered "disagree," and no one responded "strongly disagree." One undergraduate faculty suggested the use of a videotape if the Librarian could not provide a presentation.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

There were no apparent relationships between the number of years taught for CMU, gender, the number of courses taught per year, use of library presentations, or the ability to discern if assignments were better if library services were used.

Seventy-one percent of undergraduate faculty and 84% of graduate faculty required the use of library service/materials to complete one or more course assignment, but only 42% of undergraduate faculty and 35% of graduate faculty indicated that they offered library instruction to their students through Librarian or faculty presentations, or through the distribution of library promotional materials. The graduate faculty appear to use the library use instruction presentations to a greater degree than the undergraduate faculty. Since more graduate faculty than undergraduate faculty indicated that they learned library skills through some type of research course, and the majority of both groups indicated that they learned library skills "on their own," it may be assumed that faculty perception of the value of library user instruction may be based on the faculty's own experiences in learning to use the library. As stated in the literature, faculty who had to learn library research skills on their own were less likely to provide library instruction and assumed their students would learn the same way, while those who used the library more often were more likely to provide library instruction (Cannon 1994, 525).

Both sets of faculty appear to be satisfied with the level, length and frequency of library presentations that they did receive, and the availability of library materials for their classes. Off-Campus Library Services staffing for the MIMET area is now intact with two full-time Librarians scheduling library user presentation sessions on a regular basis. The survey should be administered again for a follow-up to determine the greater influence of the two variables: faculty experiences in learning to use the library as it affects their perception of the value of library use instruction, and the impact of the limited availability of library use instruction presentations due to the vacant Librarian position. Faculty who had received library use instruction could also compare those presentations to the new technologically advanced demonstrations.....and their experiences!!

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