Special Collections Outreach via Library Instruction to First Year Engineering Students

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Suzy Harris Rytting, Mid-1940s.
P0413n03_01_024. Marriott Library Digital Library. 3 May 2016.

Important: Who Were Our Librarians?

Archivist

MLIS, 2013

Some experience teaching one-shot and LEAP classes with other library faculty. Primarily a non-faculty archivist

Wanting to see Digital Library/SPC material incorporated in curriculum

Interested in helping students know what SPC resources are available and how to get to them

Undergraduate Instruction Librarian

MLIS, 2005

9 years experience teaching LEAP, 22 years in several academic library jobs

Wanting to see the entire library incorporated into outreach & instruction

Motivated by student engagement and success with materials; “the light bulb moment”
Where did our idea come from?

Both Dale and Jessica had experiences working with classes/students/faculty in different capacities - but independently

- Special Collections ‘Guest Star’ in a classroom
- Special Collections Visit for ‘Dog and Pony’

- Jessica’s reassignment to Digital Library Services and emphasis on outreach

But we never formally collaborated on a library curriculum
What is eLEAP?

Engineering LEAP

Freshmen students with engineering intentions take required courses as a cohort; building relationships that quantitatively help with graduation/retention numbers.

Paradigm: “high school graduates”

Fall Semester: Engineering & Social Science

Very popular (and safe) with students - they’re in their element.

Spring Semester: Humanities

Very scary (and mysteriously threatening) with students.

Why Does eLEAP Matter to Libraries?

*Dedicated Partnership Between Faculty and Librarians*

Potential for helping faculty develop and support their curriculum as well as the information literacy goals of the library.

*Lots of Breathing Room*

With 5 *librarian visits* in the fall and 5 more in spring -there is plenty of time to go into topics only dreamed about in a one-shot class.

Engineering students have a tight and regimented schedule; finding time as a librarian to work with their classes is tricky.

More freedom to take risks, experiment (or screw up!)

*Access to a Large Number of Students*

“Roughly one out of every three incoming students elects to join the program.”

Important: Who Were Our Faculty

**Newer Instructor**

PhD in English

1 year experience teaching LEAP, plus experience teaching online courses at private university

Happy with student results in previous spring semester, and liked the library sessions as they were last year

Strong believer in a student-driven curriculum of flexibility and encouraging student discovery

50 minute classes

**Experienced Veteran Instructor**

PhD in Political Science

9 years experience teaching LEAP, plus experience teaching as adjunct in other colleges/degree programs in person

Frustrated with students’ results in previous spring semesters, very open to experimentation with curriculum

High expectations and good at communicating this to students (and librarian)

80 minute classes
Important: Who We Thought Our Students Were...

Wholly invested in the class work

Well educated

Well rounded experiences and attitudes

Slow to judge

Open to learning new ideas

Engineering Students

Important: Who Our Students Really Were

A strong idea of ‘budget’ and perceived value for all of their classes: some classes get more of the budget than others!

Group dynamic (A vs. C students)

Some seniors, mostly freshmen

“High School Graduates”

Logical/linear thinkers

Engineering Semester: fun

Humanities Semester: difficult
Background: Librarian Dale was tired of ‘sleepers’ in class...

Librarian decides to talk much less & and make students work more in class.

Outcome: actually the results were pretty good - sometimes even poignantly so.

The core elements of active learning are student activity and engagement in the learning process. Active learning is often contrasted to the traditional lecture where students passively receive information from the instructor.

Why Special Collections Outreach?
[Stereo]Typical Special Collections Patrons
**Typical Class Structure (for “library visits*”)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Opening announcements by faculty or “peer advisor”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Librarian directs students to the campus guide -and today’s tab from which supports the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15 minutes</td>
<td>Librarian demos subscription resources and briefly contextualizes what they’ll be used for today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Librarian demos aspect of special collections resources and adds succinct (and carefully chosen) context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30 minutes</td>
<td>Group assignment -to be completed in class time and presented on-is handed out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group work time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15 minutes</td>
<td>Group reporting time (facing the judgement of the librarians)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*the old notion of “library visits” used to be tied to an actual visit to a Marriott Library classroom or computer lab. Due to campus construction, we didn’t actually visit the library once in this semester, but were in a lab in another campus building: for this semester, it was not an insurmountable problem.*
The Assignments (oral histories)

2. 2 part question: on your “research subject” find two separate articles that represent attitudes from different viewpoints or opinions and give me a direct quote (note: what caused controversy in the early days—or the later outcomes of your subject; pros/cons, etc.)
   
   a. Title of Article:
      Quote:

   b. Title of Article:
      Quote:

3. Using an Oral History, tell us about life in the development era of your subject (extra points if it from an engineer saying anything—“it was difficult”, “we drank a lot of coffee”, “I crashed the car often”)—historical analysis often refers to the people in the moment—you’ll have to read a bit, but look for quote marks “” in the articles.

   Title of source (article/chapter/etc.):
   Story/tidbit/etc.:
The Assignments (photographs)

Ok - as a team, make a single PowerPoint slide with all of these details and carefully craft a story using the humanities side of your brain (refer to humanities jargon included in handout)

Oh - I forgot to mention - you have 30 minutes! Go!
The Assignments (photographs)

What I hoped I’d get

...considering his opportunities, he had already made a success of himself. But he didn’t lay back on his ears. He kept pugging away, studying every night...


I have recently had occasion to suspect the sincerity of your motives and now I have conclusive proof that instead of assisting the immigrants you are in the habit of actually preventing recently arrived girls from meeting their friends...


Usually they are not satisfied with what they have achieved, because they expected greater prosperity when they migrated westward.

Results/Assessment: The *Library Visit* Assignments

*Dale e-mail disaster*
The Good...

The Transcontinental Railroad

- Pivotal in Uniting the Nation
- Extreme Boost in Economic Growth
- Roughly 80% of workers hired were Chinese (Doolittle).
- Cut travel from coast to coast from 6 months to 1 week (Chiu, Herman B.)
The Good...

Life of Italian American

Italian American Pride


The Good...

Retaining Culture

Examples of Italian culture and proceedings in Utah. Showing they still see themselves as Italian and practice and celebrate their heritage.


And the not-so-good...

Significant Events of Irish American History

Industrial Revolution

Many labor jobs in the US

Immigration picks up in 1820 - Predating the Famine

US was natural place the escape adversity
And the not-so-good...

**John Bennett Herrington**

- Raised in the Chickasaw Nation
- Noted for spending 330 hours in space including over 19 EVA hours
- Included in the Chickasaw hall of fame becoming the first and currently only enrolled member Native American to fly and walk in space.
And the not-so-good...
And the not-so-good...

Giving Back to Society

- Rehabilitation of Comiskey park in Chicago where he grew up
- Civil Engineering building in Purdue University
Outcomes of Experience & Observations

From perspective of the ‘instruction librarian’

Knowing goals & expectations of the teaching faculty and the special collections librarian is more important than the sun.

Library classes had great results > few transferred work to final.

Online Archives: Thumbnails must be bigger, metadata could be smaller. Students were audibly/visibly in pain from your UI. [ContentDM is pain!]

Google Images is easier, more browsable, faster, etc. To make special collections relevant to this audience we needed:

* Assignments with constrained resources (campus guide)
* Spoon Feeding: ex. specific oral histories downloaded, ready to use for a specific assignment

Outcomes of Experience & Observations

*From the perspective of the ‘special collections librarian’*

Importance of combining “how-to” instruction and stoking student interest in Special Collections resources

Demonstrating value of primary sources to engineers -- still a challenge

Important to know instructor expectations; temper my expectations

Students in classes with veteran faculty were overall much better at integrating sources into presentation

Time is of the essence; use it wisely

“How to Use” special collections materials may be more important than “How to Find” for students new to research.
Outcomes of Experience & Observations

From the perspective of a member of teaching faculty

Oral Histories Assignment was great!

Oral Histories mixed with other resource (historic newspapers, in this case) was good.

Photographs assignment worked -but we need a stronger expectation that the results transfer to final assignment

“Be very clear on what you want”.
“They’ll never have the depth you expect”.

Ways Forward & Personal Perspectives

Flipped Classroom Approach: Saves classroom time for engaged learning; expands the amount of classrooms lesson can reach

Visiting Special Collections Reading Room for hands-on experience

Inclusion of library sources/SPC sources in grading rubric for presentations

Much more conversations with faculty and their teaching goals