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Learning Through Collaboration and Partnership

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Learning Through Collaboration and Partnership

Abstract

Collaboration is vital when it comes to serving academic library patrons. In 2014, the Ottawa University library benefitted from six different partnerships. Along the way, librarians learned valuable lessons which can be applied to future collaborative endeavors.

Keywords

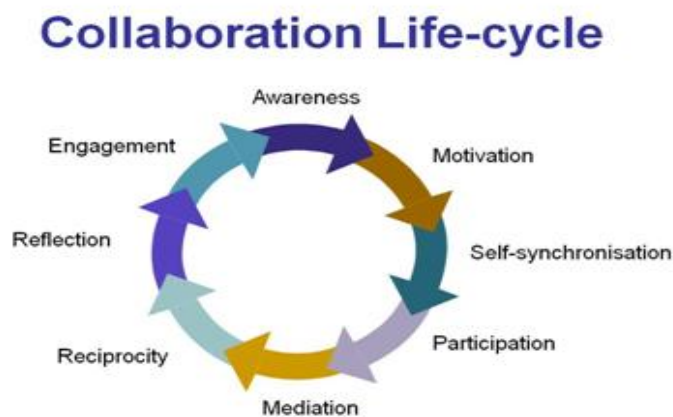
collaboration, programming, internship, information literacy

Learning through Collaboration and Partnership: Collaboration Defined

The Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) defined collaboration as “a working practice whereby individuals” worked “together to a common purpose to achieve business benefit.” Collaboration could be synchronous, where the interaction and collaboration occurred in real-time, or asynchronous, where the interaction and collaboration occurred through meetings online (Endsley & Bolstad, 2003). AIIM (2014) further suggested that collaboration was possible because of knowledge sharing, interaction and openness between a team that wanted to reach a collaborative goal as partners and put them into practice. Morgan (2013) suggested that collaboration was both a corporate and an individual benefit which improved both the education of the individual and development of the business and was also of great benefit to the customer in the business setting.

AIIM proposed a collaboration life-cycle model that clarified the collaboration process and explained collaboration at the conceptual level (Telliglou, 2003). According to Hilda Telliglou’s collaboration life-cycle model there are eight concepts which teams moved through when partnering and collaborating, but all eight could happen at any time during the collaborative process. The collaborative process could be applied to a team in the library setting, working collaboratively on programs or programming. The collaboration life-cycle model in Fig.1 could be applied to the process because the team was aware of a shared purpose, was motivated to work toward this common goal through consensus, and shared in decision-making about all the events that aided them to reach their goals. Team members expected participation from all their members and were comfortable with negotiating and collaborating for whatever was needed by their individual organizations, reciprocating and proactively sharing information or resources and making changes and alternative decisions collaboratively.

Figure 1.
Collaboration Life-Cycle



AIIM (2014)

Partnerships Defined

Partnerships were defined by the Small Business Encyclopedia (2014) as either a limited or general partnership where the partners were co-owners of the business. Limited partnerships occurred when partners invested in an opportunity, while general partners owned the business together and assumed liability for it. In the college setting, the library could develop general or limited partnerships, where faculty could work with librarians to develop an information literacy program, investing their time in developing curriculum or course improvements, while limited partnerships were formed between the faculty and the library or outside organizations and the library to create library programming.

Types of Collaboration

There were seven different types of collaboration that commonly occurred in the academic library settings:

1. Collaboration between library staff who worked in different library departments
2. Collaboration between faculty and librarians
3. Collaboration between the university administration and librarians
4. Collaboration between student organizations and librarians
5. Collaboration between librarians from different types of libraries
6. Collaboration between librarians and organizations or individuals in the community
7. Collaboration between librarians and international partners

Why Collaborate?

Collaboration was considered important to adopt in academic library settings. Bornstein (2011) stated that collaboration as a collective impact was gaining momentum in business settings. Similarly, librarians found that if they worked together as a team, whether the team included only librarians, or was made up of librarians working alongside subject faculty or administrators or whether librarians worked across library setting types, it was easier to attain the goals that were set for the team to achieve. When library grants were being written, it tended to be easier to acquire these because of the collaboration proposed. When grants were ultimately acquired for team projects, more social impact was felt because library programs tended to be made available to a much wider audience.

Ottawa University Library's Collaborative Programming

Ottawa University's Myers Library is a small academic library serving 550+ traditional aged students at the main Ottawa Campus and students at the university's five satellite sites. Four of the collaborative programs described in this paper were developed specifically to serve the traditional students, aged 18-25 at the main campus during the 2013-14 academic year.

The first of these programs involved a collaboration between librarians, faculty and undergraduate students in the History and Art Departments at the university. This collaboration provided librarians with the opportunity to develop an archival internship course, offered to History and Art seniors. Each semester 1-3 seniors participated in a structured 1-3 credit hour archival internship where they earned between 90-120 clock hours of work. The internship taught them primary archival skills such as how to create and enter metadata into archival

software programs and introduced them to elements of historical research, historical transcription and digital archiving.

The second program began four years ago, as a collaborative program between the library and a private organization working with disabled students in Paola School District. Since then, librarians have worked alongside a very dedicated young volunteer who has tirelessly worked on various digital archives projects. These have been completed successfully and uploaded on the library archives website on the Ottawa University Portal and include: the Fredrickson Collection of Digital Sermon Collection 1959-1970, the Ottawa University Annual Catalogs 1872-1970 and 1970-2011.

The third program started with a collaboration and partnership between librarians at the Myers Library and Ottawa Public Library and faculty in the Jazz Department at Ottawa University to write a Tribeca Film Institute America's Music Grant. The partnership was funded as one of thirty-one libraries that won the second round of the National Endowment for the Humanities Grant. As a result, six programs were presented at Ottawa Public Library and Ottawa University Library venues between Fall 2013 and Spring 2013 on the topics of Bluegrass and Country, Blues and Gospel, Jazz, Mambo and Hip Hop, Rock and Roll and Broadway Music. The professor in the Jazz Department acted as a specialist presenter at each of the programs and his Wednesday night class attended each of the programs as a requirement for completing their class. Each presentation started with the showing of a topical movie and was followed by a topical lecture and question-answer session, as well as an intermission of treats and conversation and a musical presentation in the genres that were presented. The public librarians' participation in this partnership with the university was both invaluable and enriching, bringing a substantial number of regular public library patrons from the community to a music program which was clearly both an enjoyable but also a learning cross-generational experience.

The fourth program was a collaboration between a librarian and an English professor at Ottawa University. The program was created to encourage college students to celebrate National Poetry Month in May by participating in the Kansas Humanities Poetry Pin-Up program. The program allowed students to create poems and share them online with the world. Students were invited to participate in the poetry pin-up program if they were interested in displaying their work and earning extra-credit for their English class. As a result, several students took up their professor's offer. Through their participation in this program at Ottawa University, undergraduate students were encouraged to share their poetic talents with the world and also improve on their poetry and writing skills. At the library, students were presented with colorful topical pages such as Nature, Love, Epic and Tragedy and asked to write their poem and pin it up on the notice-board. From the noticeboard, these poems were then sent to the Program to be shared with the world via the Kansas Humanities Poetry Pin-Up site on Pinterest.

Ottawa University Library's Information Literacy Program

Two additional university-wide collaborative programs which included Ottawa University's sites in Overland Park, KS, Wisconsin, Indiana, Arizona, and Online were also described in this paper. In 2012, an Information Literacy Librarian was hired on at Ottawa University to develop a

blended (face-to-face and online) Information Literacy Program for undergraduate students at the college and a face-to-face integrated course the satellite campuses. Prior to program creation and implementation, visits were made to administrators and faculty at each of the sites to perform a needs assessment, garner support for the program, introduce concepts of information literacy to faculty, staff and administrators, and work on implementing the program across the university. As a result of this invaluable collaboration and partnership creation process amongst faculty at a distance and at the campus, it was possible to develop a viable information literacy program which is now implemented at the campus and is now compulsory for all students to take. Intricate collaboration between the Information Literacy Librarian and faculty at the sites made the creation of an integrated information literacy pilot course possible at the Wisconsin site. It was decided that if the pilot program was successful, at the end of the Fall 2013, the course would be offered to all adult sites starting in Spring 2014, and this has since happened.

In Fall 2014, three sections of the blended and one section of the completely online for-credit information literacy course were offered at Ottawa University. Undergraduate students enrolled in the class, took the SAILS test at the beginning of the course as a pre-test assessment and again at the end of the course as a post-test assessment; however, the assessments were not part of the students' grades, because the tests were being used to assess the students' level of information literacy when they first entered the course and ascertain how much progress they had made toward becoming information literate by the end of the course. Since the information literacy course at Ottawa University was compulsory for all students to take, librarians also wanted to offer students an opportunity to test out of taking the class if they passed the SAILS test prior to taking the class with 70% set as an information literacy competency score. During the Fall 2014, librarians collaborated with advisors in the advising center at Ottawa University and setup testing facilities both in the advising center and the Library. Students who were advised to take the information literacy course were given the pre-test prior to Spring enrollment, thus making it easier for advisors to enroll those students who needed to take the class, and move those students who had passed the test forward to enroll them in other courses.

Lessons Learned

Over the past year many lessons were learned by librarians at the university in regard to archives, grant-writing, programming, information literacy, and collaborative partnerships. Archival lessons learned included, teaching History majors how to do historical research, opening the archival field to them and teaching them the basics of digital archiving, transcription work and matching student interns with topics that interested them so that they would be interested in the work they were being asked to do and were open to learning about the possibilities available to them once they graduated with a History degree. For example, if a student played a sport, it was always a good idea to match them with Ottawa University Sports Archives projects. It was also important for librarians to interview interns to discover their special skills and language abilities which were helpful in the past with collections description, e.g. Chinese and Japanese students helped to describe and identify Chinese and Japanese books and objects added to the library during which were never before identified and described.

Grant-writing lessons learned during collaboration included making sure to keep good records of all the programs presented as part of the America's Music Grant. Since it was decided that 80% of the programming would be presented at venues at the Ottawa Public Library, the public librarians were tasked with keeping program statistics, arranging for the venue availability and for photographing the programs presented at their location. As a result, the team worked together collaboratively to include programming statistics and digital photographs when writing the final report, submitted at the conclusion of the grant. Since the university was the primary grant recipient, it was the university librarian's task to make sure that all musicians-presenters at each of the programs were paid and that the monies left at the end the program would be used appropriately to continue presenting additional music programs collaboratively. As a result, two more programs were presented using the America's Music Grant funds left over after the initial six were presented. A Jazz program was presented in the Fall of 2014 at an off-campus location, well attended by public and university patrons and an additional Jazz program will be presented in the Spring of 2014.

The library programming lessons learned during collaboration included discovering that it was vital to learn how the advertising process at the university worked and how it was different from that of those partnering with the library. It was also found to be very important to participate in advanced program advertising so that both student and public audiences were reminded of the upcoming programs and new participants. Both the Myers Library and the Ottawa Public Library made flyers for their noticeboards and advertised their upcoming programs on their websites and in LibGuides. Librarians also discovered the necessity of letting their partners know early about any changes that would affect the program's organization, presentation or format, so that it could be dealt with or advertised. Additionally, librarians discovered that programming arranged around existing academic music classes at the university worked very well for students; especially when the students involved were also offered the opportunity for earning extra credit and were treated to food after each session. Librarians also found that if programs were organized in the correct way, students were able to learn from and interact with their peers and the public while participating and that this would enrich their learning experiences.

The information literacy lessons learned during collaboration with subject faculty at the university included discovering how to develop partnerships with the faculty and intentionally garner their support for information literacy curriculum that was created. Librarians also learned that it was important to provide the faculty with a good listening ear when it was needed and that they should not shy away for faculty interaction when it was available, especially when there would be an opportunity to talk about information literacy program, answer questions about it and additionally gather input from faculty about their concerns.

Conclusion

Partnering through collaboration is about getting the right people together to work on projects that will bring positive change and success into communities through the librarian interest and involvement. Librarians can then set goals collaboratively and establish partnerships to solve

complex problems within the library itself or establish necessary library programming and opportunities that would have long-lasting, positive effects on library organizations (Bornstein, 2011).

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