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The Teaching Library: Rethinking Library Services

Ellen Meltzer

From Undergraduate Library to Teaching Library

The James K. Moffitt Undergraduate Library, opened in the fall of 1970 on the University of California, Berkeley campus, was conceived and completed during a period of escalating democracy on college campuses with undergraduate libraries as one example. Prior to this period of student activism, undergraduates at large universities were traditionally denied access to the stacks of the research collections. To get their hands on books, they had to fill out a slip and request that the books or bound journals they wanted to read be paged from the stacks. Students could go through a lengthy process of identifying items from the enormous card catalog (taking up two massive rooms), filling out forms for each desired title, standing in a long line, and waiting, only to discover that what they had paged was not what they really needed.

In a growth economy, emerging spirit of openness and free speech, several large university campuses built new undergraduate libraries.² Between 1960-1970, the Universities of British Columbia, Missouri, Wisconsin, Indiana, Miami, Pennsylvania, Cornell, Southern California, Notre Dame, Pennsylvania State, Alberta, Texas, Washington, Johns Hopkins, Boston, Florida, SUNY-Albany, Stanford, Ohio State, Bowling Green, Cleveland State, Miami University, UC San Diego, Michigan State, Pittsburgh, Texas A&M, Hawaii, North Carolina, Duke, Iowa State, Nebraska, UC Berkeley,

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Technology in Libraries: Essays in Honor of Anne Grodzins Lipow, ed. Roy Tennant. Lulu.com, 2008.

² Person, Roland Conrad. *A New Path: Undergraduate Libraries at United States and Canadian Universities, 1949-1987*. New York, Greenwood Press: 1988.

and Chicago founded undergrad libraries. (And Pennsylvania and SUNY-Albany closed them in the same period.) (Harvard, Illinois, UCLA, Michigan and others had established undergraduate libraries as far back as 1949.³) Yet more undergraduate libraries continued to be built.

Undergraduates were perceived to have special requirements. In the Main Stack of the Research Library, books and journals were interfiled; English and languages other than English — over 60% of Cal's collections — were all found next to each other on the shelves. It could be difficult, for example, to find a simple English language version of *The Doll's House*. The original Doe stacks were crammed, dark, dusty and even frightening; an earthquake disaster site if there ever was one. These conditions and the feeling among some faculty that undergrads were a mass of the “great unwashed” played a part in moving them away from the true research collections to the undergrad library.

The new undergraduate libraries would serve the needs of this group of activist students with open stacks, collections of the “best books” selected for them by librarians focusing on undergraduates; separate reserve collections; and specialized reference and instruction services. Undergraduate libraries were often served by their own separate technical service operations.

In addition to doing reference and collection management, librarians from Moffitt Undergraduate Library at UC Berkeley taught an undergraduate research methodologies class, Bibliography 1, each quarter through UC Berkeley's Library School. Up to twenty-five sessions of the class were taught each quarter until 1985. In addition to a reference desk staffed for many years from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm most days, this was the primary method Moffitt Librarians reached Cal's undergraduates with bibliographic instruction, as it was referred to at the time.⁴

³ Ibid, p.49.

⁴ For more information about Bibliography 1, see Wheeler, Helen Ripper. *For-Credit, Undergraduate, Bibliographic Instruction Courses in the University of California System With Consideration of the Berkeley Campus' Bibliography 1 Course-Program's History As a Model*. [Alexandria, Va.?): ERIC Document Reproduction Service, 1986.

Forming the Teaching Library

Fast forward to 1992. The Library had a new University Librarian⁵, a new vision, and transformative technologies to understand and integrate into student learning. It was the year before Anne Lipow published *Rethinking Reference In Academic Libraries*. And rethink we did. Increasingly, students were conducting research from the comfort of their residence halls and apartments, as online resources burgeoned in the digital library space.

At the University of California system, the Division of Library Automation (DLA) was making impressive progress in library automation and access to an array of online information resources. Over the period of a few years, databases came on line with citations or full text via the Melvyl Catalog system: Magazine Index, National Newspaper Index, Computer Database, MEDLINE, INSPEC, ABI/Inform, ERIC, GeoRef, Hispanic American Periodicals Index (HAPI), Legi-Slate, PsycINFO and more.

It became possible to download citations from Melvyl into personal citation management software (e.g., EndNote, ProCite). An impressive and seamless online interlibrary loan service dubbed Request was launched in 1993. Library users were greeting these new online databases and services with amazement and enthusiasm. Less and less (and now, even less and less!), did students have to come into the physical space of the library to conduct their research. “During her keynote address at the *Ninth Australasian Information Online and On Disc Conference* in 1999, Ann [sic] Grodzins Lipow made the now oft quoted observation, ‘Rather than thinking of our users as remote, we should instead recognize that it is we who are remote from our users.’”⁶ The die of the virtual library was cast.

Librarians and library staff were no longer envisioned to be passive recipients of students approaching the reference desk, but as teachers who sought out students in the classroom. UC Berkeley’s Teaching Library (TLIB) was born. Part of the reframing of the library was to liberate library

⁵ Actually, there were two new University Librarians in a short period of time who supported the Teaching Library concept: Dorothy Gregor, from 1992-1994 and Peter Lyman, 1994-1998.

⁵ Mizzy, Dianne. 2004. The Virtual Reference Librarian’s Handbook (review). *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*. 4, no.1, p. 157-158.

⁶ Taken from initial Program Coordinator job descriptions.

staff from the tasks of operation managers, spending the bulk of their energies on facilities problems, for example, and instead to refocus their intellectual energies on teaching and imagining how students could integrate research skills smoothly into their academic lives. In large part, TLIB was an extension of Moffitt Undergraduate Library, but envisioned in a new way. By giving this service a new name and identity, attention was drawn to the Teaching Library both on campus and beyond. TLIB had a new logo, a black and white book atop a computer, and lapel (or backpack) buttons were made to celebrate its birth. The creation of this new unit resulted in a spirited, cohesive group of enthusiastic library professionals, from the administrative assistant to the head.

There were several bold moves in imagining the Teaching Library. One was its organizational structure. TLIB was comprised of a group of program coordinators who were both professional librarians and high level library assistants. Those in the library assistant series were teamed with a librarian. While all the positions were filled internally to the library, staff had to apply for the positions, identifying themselves as being passionate about teaching. As a result, TLIB staff clearly relished developing curriculum, working in tandem with faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and campus student services staff.

Requiring interested staff library-wide to apply for TLIB positions (including those already working in Moffitt Library) resulted in a new and surprising mix of staff coming from unexpected corners of the Library, such as Interlibrary Loan and the Biosciences Library Circulation department. This trend continued in later years, when TLIB attracted and nurtured staff from the Acquisitions Department and Library Conservation. Our ads (if we had had them) would have read: “One qualification needed: love of teaching. Will train.”

Program Coordinators were hired, librarians and library assistants. They were responsible for “providing leadership in developing, implementing and evaluating course-integrated, stand alone and adjunct information literacy programs aimed at students and faculty.”⁷ They coordinated various aspects of teaching and learning, such as setting up instructional sessions for large

⁷ Taken from initial Program Coordinator job descriptions.

undergraduate research courses; coordinating tours; doing outreach to non-library campus units responsible for undergraduate services (e.g., Student Learning Center, Reentry Student Program); Web and Web-based instruction; faculty seminars. As first head of the Teaching Library, I tried to instill a can-do attitude within the staff; an atmosphere where the first answer would always be “yes.” (A very Anne Lipow-esque trait, I might add.) As a result, “interesting” projects came our way:

- Developing and teaching gopher and the first campus World Wide Web classes.
- Constructing a cross-discipline database of students’ dissertation topics in the social sciences and humanities so that campus graduate students could be aware of others researching similar topics in fields other than their own (e.g., across history, sociology, and political science), and share ideas.
- Creating the overall site design of a project using DynaText as an interface for transliterating scanned images of Catalan Medieval manuscripts for a UC Berkeley – UC Irvine distance learning course.
- Setting up a server and training for graduate students for the UC Berkeley Technology and Humanities Project.
- Creating a pilot program using California Heritage materials from the UC Berkeley Bancroft Library to work with local area K-12 teachers and students through UC Berkeley’s Interactive University project.

User research from the beginning

In addition to Program Coordinators, a half-time User Research coordinator position was created. The User Research Coordinator, the original posting stated, “will play an important role in defining and classifying users into logical segments, defining and tracking their evolving needs, aiding in suggesting and testing service concepts, and bringing new information

products and services to the Library in a timely fashion.⁸ This position would be responsible for conducting user studies, such as surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and usability studies with UC Berkeley students and faculty.⁹ The goal of creating such a position in the Library was to ensure that users drove the direction of library services.¹⁰ Creating this position was prescient, in many ways. It pre-dated the creation of many such positions in academic libraries, and has proven to be a rich information resource for the campus and to the library profession.¹¹

Other services as part of TLIB

Two other services also were part of the Teaching Library: the Media Resources Center (MRC) and the Library Graphics Service. Many institutions will recognize quirky reporting lines based on history or the need to put a service somewhere on an organization chart that does not always make organizational sense. The Media Research Center reported to the Teaching Library because it had reported to Moffitt Undergraduate Library. One of the staff of the MRC was a crack cataloger who cataloged films, videos and DVDs with rich access points, insuring that non-print materials were integrated into the catalog and into teaching. Streaming audio was part of the MRC Web site early on. In addition to giving instructional sessions for undergraduates and faculty seminars, the Head of MRC also taught in the film department on campus.

Having the Library Graphics Service reporting to the Teaching Library was a positive surprise that helped raise TLIB's visibility on campus. While this reporting relationship made little sense organizationally, it was a definite advantage. UC Berkeley's Graphics Service, consisting of two graphic designers, produces more beautiful, professional-looking materials than in

⁸ From original User Research Coordinator position posting.

⁹ See, for example, Maughan, P. D. "Assessing information literacy among undergraduates: a discussion of the literature and the University of California-Berkeley assessment experience." *College & Research Libraries*, v. 62 no. 1 (January 2001) p. 71-85

¹⁰ For more information on the activities of the User Research Coordinator, see <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/userresearch/>

¹¹ See also <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/autobiography/pmaughan/publications.html>

any library I have ever visited. This office was responsible for library signage, library exhibit labels, Web design, range finder signs for the fifty-five miles of stack ranges in the Main (Doe) Library Gardner stacks, and more. Because they were part of TLIB, they were very responsive to Teaching Library requests, and they brought the point of view and creativity of artists to discussions with the entire Teaching Library team.

What contributed to the success of the Teaching Library?

There were several factors contributing to the Teaching Library's success, and many of these could be used for launching new library services still today. First was support and enthusiasm from the university library administration. Since this was a new slant for the library, and library administration felt responsible in part for this new direction, and the Teaching Library truly supported student and faculty learning, there was strong buy-in for this new service and style of creating and managing a library unit. Administrative support is a key factor to the success of any library initiatives, but especially for launching new ones.

Second, the idea of belonging to a new library unit was very appealing to the people who applied for Teaching Library positions. TLIB had a certain *elan vital* that drove its members. There was a pioneering spirit, a "we can do it!" attitude motivating the Teaching Library team. The group was very cooperative and supportive of each other's areas. There was no attitude of "Sorry, I'm too busy to do an instructional session for you." If someone needed help in planning classes or programs there was very much a spirit of,

“How can I help?” From the administrative assistant on up, the Teaching Library was a joint entity.

Furnishing a new imprint and name to a service that was in many ways similar to what we were already doing added to the Teaching Library’s success. “What’s the Teaching Library?” colleagues across campus would ask. With a new logo, newly recruited staff, and a new internal structure, joined with a new enthusiasm for our work, a buzz was created on campus about the Teaching Library and our services.

Brainstorming was the norm in the Teaching Library. When it came time for activities such as creating enticing posters for drop-in instructional sessions (which were largely successful), the group allowed ideas to flow freely and came up with wonderful ideas that were turned into fabulous designs by the library’s graphic designer.

Another key to the success of the Teaching Library was that staff had a willingness to innovate. When library administrators asked TLIB staff if something were possible, if we could run a new service or support a class in a technologically inventive way, the staff would try to support it no matter how busy we were or how impossible the task seemed. Staff would seek out help behind the scenes, pull out their hair, but do everything to support innovation. Saying “yes” first and worrying about “how” later often helped in gaining increased support for the Teaching Library.

Another key to the success of the Teaching Library was its international visibility. During the first few years of the Teaching Library, Anne Lipow was a frequent trainer in libraries across Australia and New Zealand. She facilitated discussions and gave talks on topics such as Virtual Reference, the Library without Walls, and Reference Service in the Digital Environment. I don’t know exactly what Anne ever said about the Teaching Library, but I received frequent requests to meet and discuss it to visiting librarians from around the world. These visits provided wonderful opportunities to talk and learn from visiting librarians. Moreover, through visitors, the ideas generated by the Teaching Library had wider discussion.

I left the Teaching Library in 2001, and its third Head came to the library in June, 2007. Much of the openness, willingness to innovate, team spirit, managing to the strengths of staff, and focusing on end users can find inspiration in Anne’s own life and career. In whatever shape library services

takes in the next decades, I hope those qualities Anne best embodied continue on.

Anne, an inspiration

An aside about Anne: Anne had a wonderful quality of inclusiveness in her enthusiasm, and I consider myself so lucky to have experienced that and to be able to carry some of her enthusiasm on. She was someone who was always light years ahead of everyone else in terms of her creativity. (In fact, when the library sponsored an ARL Creativity workshop, and the staff lined up in order of their scores after taking a creativity assessment, Anne fell at the far end of the creativity scale.) She had an incredible talent for mixing vision, humor, and absurdity that would sometimes be just on the border of total outrageousness. One example was in the early 1980's when it was clear the library world was headed in a whole new direction. The Melvyl Catalog, the union catalog of the University of California was in the works. UC Berkeley's University Librarian was Joe Rosenthal, a shy and circumspect man whose shyness could be construed as aloofness. He was someone with the smarts to know you could only accomplish two or three major initiatives during one's tenure as University Librarian. One of these was the retrospective conversion of the card catalog to electronic format. He had the will to do it, but lacked the charisma to motivate the library staff to use and train patrons to use catalogs on microfiche that were an interim outcome of recon. Not surprisingly, Anne came up with an unlikely, wacky idea: she somehow got Joe to agree (I would have liked to be in on THAT meeting!) to have small red books printed, about three by three inches in size, entitled *Quotations from Chairman Joe*. The Little Red Book, as it was referred to (taking a cue from Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book*), was distributed to everyone in the Library. Public service staff, delighted by this unlikely incentive, were able to get behind teaching people how to use the microfiche catalogs. (These truly represented one of the low points in library history.) This was a quintessential Anne project!