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Globalizing Library Instruction: Engaging Students at International Branch Campuses

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CHAPTER FIVE



Globalizing Library Instruction:

Engaging Students at International Branch Campuses

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Introduction

Today's academic libraries must be able to communicate efficiently the depth of their resources to all campus communities, and Stony Brook University Libraries have worked to apply instructional methods to a broad spectrum of users. Our library has been using emerging technology, open access resources, and innovative teaching methods to engage with our local and global student and faculty community. Using our campus in South Korea as an example, we will highlight a number of strategies developed for delivering equitable information instruction sessions to our international students at satellite campuses across the world.

The current era in American academic libraries is one of globalized teaching and learning. As academia expands into new learning markets, libraries must be prepared and appropriately situated to support student success in these courses. The learning experience we provide for our international campus is designed to capitalize on the diversity of our resources and engage students on many levels of the research process. Our chapter discusses the adaptations we have made to our instruction practices and our tailoring of resources and services to online delivery for international students.

Many academic institutions have satellite campuses, and libraries are increasingly called upon to support these global initiatives. This chapter lays a framework for libraries developing instruction practice to include international branch campuses (IBC). Our mission as librarians is to increase access to scholarly resources, promote information exchange, contribute to student learning of effective information use, and provide support to all researchers across the university.

Today's libraries must be able to engage patrons using a variety of means, and this includes possessing the technological creativity to deliver instruction outside of the traditional brick-and-mortar classroom setting. In this chapter, we discuss a number of technological practices to engage students and collaborate with faculty across traditional boundaries. The goal of any information session is for students to become better equipped to access the information they need, evaluate what they find, and seek additional help in navigating those resources. Our forward-facing liaison model coupled with creative applications of technology in our information sessions has allowed our library to proactively serve diverse populations.

Librarians must be ready to experiment and adapt in order to provide the most comprehensive instruction possible. We can only engage our users if we are able to connect with them, and globalization has necessitated that we expand our reach to academic communities across the world. In this essay, we demonstrate methods for developing a holistic and meaningful approach to information instruction practices for academic librarians teaching remotely.

Literature Review

Embracing diversity in information literacy has been a significant topic of interest and concern for many years in academic libraries. As the work of our researchers, departments, and institutions develops globally, this topic must come to the forefront of our practice. This international context inspired the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Student Learning and Information Literacy Committee, Global Perspectives on Information Literacy Working Group to develop a framework and understanding of information literacy concepts around the world. The group worked with librarians from different regions to explore similarities and differences in the way we understand and teach information literacy in order to form a more global understanding of best practices.¹ They found a shared difficulty in most of the narratives with communicating the discipline of information literacy but also a shared understanding of the importance of this work not just for scholarship but for social justice, citizenship, and communication.

Though information literacy teaching is an essential part of librarianship around the world, there are factors US-based librarians should consider when reaching out to their international communities. Jennifer Congyan Zhao and Tara Mawhinney² compared the information literacy skills and challenges of native English-speaking students and Chinese international students at McGill University and found that both groups needed help selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing sources. The Chinese international students needed additional assistance with culturally specific items like locating items in the library, citation and plagiarism, and awareness of library services. This is an important consideration for IBCs but equally important for international students on an institution's main campus. Information literacy classes can adapt to international audiences by providing more foundational knowledge about the ways to seek help in the library and the services and resources that students are able to access.

One of the best ways to provide this culturally specific library information is to reach out to groups of international students early and often, whether they are on main campus or a satellite campus. California State University, Fresno, began an effort to reach out to international students during their orientation and invited them to a more intensive library event early in the semester where they could see the space and learn about library

services.³ Outreach like this to international students on satellite campuses may have more challenges, since these campuses may not have access to the full range of resources and services that the main campus has.

The lessons from global undertakings can also be applied closer to home. There are several examples of US-based libraries working with IBC students and colleagues abroad to develop and enhance information literacy teaching. Mount Saint Vincent University in Nova Scotia, Canada, and Bermuda College in Hamilton, Bermuda, share several dual enrollment programs. Librarians at both institutions collaborated to use web conferencing software to provide online information literacy training to both sites. It was important to conduct shared information literacy courses because the sites share library resources and many students who begin their studies at Bermuda College go on to finish their degrees at Mount Saint Vincent, with full access to onsite and online resources.⁴ Long Island University's Brooklyn campus took a similar approach to US students studying in their four-year Global College program, which takes place entirely abroad in several different countries. Though this program focuses on American students, the types of outreach and instruction are similar to reaching satellite campus students because the Global College students spend only four days orienting to the main campus before beginning their international journey.⁵ For these students, it is imperative to be able to access and effectively use the library's online resources.

The relationships that US campus libraries have with their IBCs are just as diverse as the outreach efforts to international students. Harriett Green conducted a study of librarians working with international branch campuses and found that most of these campuses had few onsite staff members and relied on the electronic resources and virtual services of the main campus.⁶ Outreach to these satellite campuses is vital for sharing both access to library resources and culturally specific library services with international students.

Background of SUNY Korea and Library

SUNY Korea is the first American university and one of the founding universities of the Incheon Global Campus in Incheon, South Korea, along with Ghent University, George Mason University, and the University of Utah. Like Qatar Foundation's Education City,⁷ these institutions share a single campus but are separately administered by their home institutions. These institutions were invited by the South Korean government to establish and offer American- and European-style higher education experiences that allow students from the Northeast Asia region to earn international degrees without going abroad. The Incheon Global Campus is located in the Incheon Free Economic Zone and is being developed as a global hub for international business, research and development, and education in Northeast Asia. Instruction is in English and graduates will be poised for entering multinational and/or globally focused careers. Other institutions preparing to offer degree programs at the Incheon Global Campus includes, among other US and European universities, the Fashion Institute of Technology, another SUNY institution.

Designed to extend the academic strengths and educational model of Stony Brook University, SUNY Korea was launched in 2012 with graduate programs in computer science and technology and society. Today, it offers bachelor's, master's, and/or doctoral degrees in computer science, mechanical engineering, technological systems management, business management, and applied mathematics and statistics, and has an enrollment of about 350. Undergraduate students complete three years of coursework on the

Incheon campus, spending their sophomore year on the Stony Brook campus in New York. During their immersive year in New York, they take courses to meet the Stony Brook curriculum requirements and experience the full range of cultural and extracurricular events and activities that other Stony Brook University students have. Graduate students also have the option to study at the Stony Brook, New York, campus.

Like the Qatar instance, each university at the Incheon Global Campus administers its own suite of library resources and services. A central library shared by all the institutions is part of the vision for the campus at steady state, and its services and resources are currently under development. SUNY Korea students and faculty have 24/7 access to all the electronic resources that Stony Brook University provides. These resources and services are supplemented by the central library and consortial arrangements.

SUNY Korea Case Study

Personalized learning within a global community calls for academic librarians to create customized spaces for engagement. Such spaces may be as coordinated as a synchronous online session, a specialized subject guide acting as a portal for a specific population, or just the flexibility to offer specialized help on request. There are no librarians on site at the Incheon campus. Resources for these students include custom appointments for virtual reference at a time conducive to both parties' time zones. We have also created a research guide that is meant to act as a gateway into the Stony Brook University Libraries for our SUNY Korea students.

When our liaisons coordinate instruction for SUNY Korea, these sessions are carefully planned to account for the thirteen-hour time difference as well as the interdisciplinary resources most of these courses engage with. In the case of one such session, liaisons provided introductory information literacy instruction to two upper-level undergraduate courses that were taught by the same instructor at SUNY Korea. These courses focused on data science management and methods of socio-tech decision-making. Because of the time difference, the course instructors agreed to combine the session into one. The session was held at 2 a.m. (EST), and for this reason the liaisons teaching the session decided to limit the conferencing to audio, with opportunity for live Q&A as well as the chat feature. Adobe Connect is the platform for online sessions at Stony Brook University. We were able to share librarians' screens, and due to the interdisciplinary focus of both courses, a variety of resources were demonstrated, including Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, IEEE, and JSTOR. Plagiarism and citation management were covered and Endnote was demonstrated to students.

Survey Data

A survey was sent out to student participants of the session held in October 2016. The session addressed ways to contact liaison librarians, ensuring access to library materials, types of resources available, as well as search methods and evaluative criteria. When the open-ended question "What did you find most helpful about the library session?" was asked, student responses generally fell into four categories: access and use of databases (57.1 percent), critical thinking skills (19.2 percent), communication and library liaison contact (14.3 percent), or new knowledge (9.5 percent). In the broadest category, the

library databases, student responses indicated that instruction on “how to access the library database” or “how to limit the number of articles” was the most helpful aspect of the session.

Presenters informed students that due to the significant time difference, neither librarian instructors nor students would be visible on screen. Adobe Connect was used to share the presenters’ screens but neither presenter was visible to the students over the course of the session. When students were asked if it would be helpful to use video conferencing during the library instruction session, 81.5 percent of respondents indicated that it would be. Despite no visuals of the presenters, students’ self-reported willingness to reach out to librarians on their own was not impacted and 85.2 percent indicated they would be “comfortable emailing a librarian.” This is especially important for our SUNY Korea students as initial contact and the majority of communication will be through email.

When asked to provide suggestions for other topics and resources that liaison librarians might cover in future sessions, student responses again fell into a discernible pattern. Responses could be categorized as either additional help with topics covered in the session (53.8 percent), questions not specific to library resources (15.4 percent), or an indication that they had no suggestions (30.8 percent). Suggestions for additional help included advanced search techniques, strategies for constructing a search, or evaluation of subject-specific databases. Students were also asked to share their feedback on how to expand the libraries’ engagement with our students at SUNY Korea.

Students were given the opportunity to write a narrative response on how the library might improve these sessions to address the needs of future students at SUNY Korea. Again, responses varied but overall they can be classified into several emergent themes. The desire for a variety of workshops to be offered in future (30.8 percent) received a number of topic suggestions, including one that asked for a library workshop paired with their orientation. Students also made requests for additional help in the form of video conferencing (15.4 percent) and requests for on-site help due to the significant time difference (15.4 percent).

Conclusion

Assessment is a vital component in evaluating the impact of instruction and is of particular significance when sessions are delivered remotely. In the case of SUNY Korea, student feedback greatly informs our liaisons’ instructional practices and provides insight on how to shape our engagement with these students in the future. Based on survey responses, we will be adjusting and exploring opportunities for combining multiple course sections to attend information literacy sessions. Our liaisons will also be preparing workshops and other online tutorials to best prepare these students for a seamless transition to their immersive year in New York. We will continue to expand our synchronous sessions online and explore methods for deepening engagement with our students regardless of their physical location.

Notes

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