Thoughts about supporting A&I Seminars – From the Librarians

Supporting the A&I seminars will impact the way we partner with faculty to teach students information literacy. How do we maximise the many benefits of the new seminar model while mitigating against the potential impact on the other areas of the curriculum that we serve? In our effort to answer that question, we reviewed our instruction and appointment statistics to consider how to integrate the new A&I seminars into the work that we already do during Fall term.

Fitting the A&I Seminars into Our Current Work

There are 8 liaison librarians in the library working a total of 7.13 FTE. During Fall of 2008, we taught 68 classes and conducted 377 individual student appointments. In addition, we offered curricular support from the Research/IT desk for 540 hours during Fall term. In the past four years, we have been directly involved in between 30% and 50% of the first-year seminars offered on campus.

Librarians teach at all levels during Fall term within their liaison areas. Differences in departmental curricula mean that some liaisons teach far more 100-level courses than others. Approximately a third of us work primarily with upper-level courses, a third work primarily with 100-level courses, and a third work with an equal number of upper- and lower-level courses. For this reason, distribution of the A&I seminars among the librarians will be complex.

In addition to direct work in the classroom, librarians meet with students individually and in small groups. In Fall of 2008, 75% of these appointments were with sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Just under 10% of our appointments were with first-year students who were enrolled in first-year seminars. As we project how these numbers might change next year, we assumed that we would directly support at least two thirds of the A&I seminars and that the same proportion of enrolled students would visit us in our offices as had visited us in previous years. Given these assumptions, we project that the number of appointments with A&I students would more than double.
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<th>Potential Scenarios</th>
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| Liaisons continue to work with A&I seminars that are offered by their liaison departments | ● Faculty will be able to continue working with their liaisons, who have relevant expertise and experience.  
● First-year students will be introduced to the liaison model that will characterize their interactions with the library for all other courses. | ● Scheduling library sessions may be difficult, particularly if the seminars fall more heavily in certain departments.  
● Some librarians may be disproportionately affected by the increase in teaching and appointment load. |
| Scheduling of library sessions based on librarian availability rather than liaison area | ● Allows us to assure that each seminar that wants one can have a librarian at the time that makes most sense within the syllabus.  
● Allows librarians to manage their workloads cooperatively.  
● Increases the potential that students will become acquainted with many more librarians. | ● It may require more lead time to prepare to support unfamiliar assignments,  
● Librarians feel more comfortable teaching in their disciplinary areas.  
● Students would not be introduced to the liaison model that will characterize their interactions with the library for all other courses. |
| Hybrid: Faculty contact their liaison, who determines whether another librarian could support the assignment. | ● Liaisons have experience working together to maximize each other’s expertise, so this would draw on that model.  
● Many seminars are interdisciplinary, so other librarians may be in a better position to support the particular assignments.  
● Allows librarians to manage their workloads cooperatively. | ● It may remove the continuity of having potential majors meeting their liaison early on in the college career.  
● Faculty may end up working with an unfamiliar librarian. |
Thoughts about Course Scheduling

Our choice of which of these models to adopt will depend in part on when the A&I seminars are scheduled. If all the courses are scheduled within one or two course periods, we will likely have to adopt options 2 or 3. Doing so could dilute the librarians’ ability to provide nuanced, assignment-specific library instruction. In addition, there will likely be scheduling conflicts for the classroom labs that are so important to first year instruction. Even if courses are spread out throughout the day, the increase in the raw number of courses that we support may mean that faculty across the curriculum will have to be more flexible about the timing of library sessions within their syllabi.

The one advantage to having all of the A&I seminars scheduled during one or two class periods is that there would be fewer conflicts with requests for librarians to support upper-level courses, since most of the classroom spaces would be populated by A&I seminars. We would also be able to plan other activities around the knowledge that specific times of each week will be devoted to supporting these courses.

Concluding Thoughts

We remain excited about the possibilities for reaching many more first-year students than we have in the past, and doing so in a more intentional and coordinated way. We hope that the background information and scenarios we explored will contribute to the committee's efforts to maximize the benefits of these seminars. We look forward to participating in the planning process over the next year.