Embedded Librarianship: Librarian and Faculty Perspectives

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Introduction

Several years ago, a subset of librarians at Salem State University embarked on a journey of embedded librarianship. These collaborations are deeply rooted in the information needs of the students within the discipline, and while there are many commonalities, each experience is unique to the faculty-librarian team. This paper offers our perspectives on our experiences, describes their inception, growth, and development, and offers thoughts on how our work reflects current educational practices. While the thrust of this paper is to describe each collaboration in its distinctiveness, it can be fairly said that each constitutes a species of the embedded genus. What makes embedded librarianship work is its flexibility, which has allowed for unique collaborations to flourish.

The term “embedded librarianship” was coined by Dewey (2004), and it refers to the act of embedding oneself in the population being served, acting as to achieve a deeper level of integration within the group, which requires “more direct and purposeful interaction than acting in parallel” (6) with them. Shumaker and Talley describe embedded librarianship as involving a
focus “on the needs of the one or more specific groups, building relationships with these groups, developing a deep understanding of their work, and providing information services that are highly customized and targeted to their greatest needs” (2009, 8). While both of these definitions apply to embedded experiences in a variety of groups and circumstances, this paper focuses on embedded experiences in business, sociology, and communications courses.

There are many ways to refer to the embedded experience. While faculty may be more inclined to call it co-teaching (Roth and Tobin 2005), some librarians refer to it as faculty-librarian collaboration (Cassidy and Hendrickson 2013). These collaborations, however, have not always involved a true integration in a course as described by Dewey. Up to the late 1980s, faculty-librarian collaborations referred to librarians tailoring instruction to the needs of the class or the professor making time during the semester for one-shot library instruction sessions. References to these more meaningful partnerships between librarians and faculty do not increase in the literature until the 2000s (Cassidy and Hendrickson 2013). Øvern (2014) refers to these new types of partnerships as team-teaching, which involves faculty-librarian collaboration on “planning the learning outcomes, assignments, assessments etc.” (43), as well as being present and participating in each other’s lectures and sessions.

Library literature is rich with examples of faculty-librarian collaboration. Gaspar and Wetzel (2009) chronicle their experiences collaborating on undergraduate writing courses. Black et al. (2001) discuss how collaboration can lead to strong information literacy infrastructure and faculty development programs. Perhaps closest to our experience is the 2005 ethnographic study by Manuel et al. of faculty attitudes regarding collaboration with librarians.

The majority of these collaboration articles are quantitative and survey based, with less focus on the unique experience of the embedded partnership, and how personal experiences reflect on current educational practices. This praxis paper focuses on six personal narratives (three librarian, three faculty), which chronicle first person accounts of the embedded librarian/co-teaching/collaboration experience. Each touches upon the evolution of their partnership, impact on student learning, assessment (where applicable), challenges, and benefits.

**Business**

Professor Linda Coleman has always believed in the importance of conscious academic research, striving to make it a prominent part of her Marketing courses. Almost all of her classes involve at least one research-intensive assignment. As much as Linda wanted her students to conduct research, she felt students were limited in their views, their understanding of the bigger world around them, and how to find out more about it. Confronted with this issue, she partnered with librarians Nancy Dennis and Marcela Isuster.

**LIBRARIAN PERSPECTIVE**

For a librarian, being embedded in the class makes good sense when one considers the peculiarities of business research. Unlike other disciplines where looking for information in articles and books may be enough, business information comes from a variety of sources and
formats such as industry reports and stock market data. These sources vary in complexity (for which the reader may not be ready for) and availability (Lavin 1995). To the unskilled researcher, the process of looking for business information can feel daunting. As for the librarian, it can be challenging to teach how to locate and use these various sources in a one-shot information literacy session. More often than not, research for business assignments does not allow for a one-size-fits-all approach. One student may need industry research, while another looks for company information, meanwhile a third one is exploring business theory. Because of this, many business professors have moved from having ad hoc information literacy instruction sessions to formally making them part of the curriculum (Fiegen et al. 2002).

My predecessor, Nancy Dennis (Business Librarian from 2005-2013) and Linda Coleman established and continuously refined their framework for embedded librarianship practice during this time frame. To meet the needs of the varied nature of assignments in Marketing 241, 445, and 466, a sequence of four library classes per section over the period of one month was set up. Since the classes met for 75 minutes, there was plenty of time for the librarian’s modeling of sources and hands-on research and creation of presentations. In MKT 445, weeks one and two were devoted to periodical databases and trade sources; week three to citing sources; and week four to the literature review paper (called the ISM paper). In 2009, Nancy recruited Jason Soohoo, our resident librarian expert in presentation software, to conduct sessions in PowerPoint and Prezi.

The total number of sessions grew over eight years. In 2005-2006, Nancy and Linda conducted pre- and post-tests to evaluate the impact of the sessions on students’ knowledge of marketing resources (Coleman et al, 2009). Control groups were used for comparison.

Nancy’s embeddedness in the marketing classes was aided by the fact that since 2006 she had begun holding office hours twice weekly on site at the Bertolon School of Business. When the Salem State Library was closed in October 2007, her office was formally relocated to within the administrative suite at Bertolon. This made her available to business faculty and students for 40 hours a week. When the interim library opened in Fall 2009, she resumed daily on-site office hours in the business school. Her close, repeated proximity to business students and faculty enabled her to provide intensive assistance to all business students and faculty and to establish long-lasting relationships.

In spring 2013, Salem State Library was accepted into the Association of College and Research Libraries’ Assessment in Action (AiA) initiative, which aimed to assess the impact of information literacy instruction on student success. This project coincided with my arrival as the new business librarian. Initially I followed the content sequence established by Nancy, but have gradually adopted my own approaches to content and pedagogy over the past three semesters.

Because of our participation in AiA, it was imperative to increase our presence in the course so that we could assess the impact of librarian instruction. Methods of assessment for information literacy in business courses vary. Some librarians have used surveys to measure students’ perception of their own information literacy skills (McInnis Bowers et al., 2009). Nancy and I did not find this approach to be useful when trying to measure the impact of our instruction on student success. Another possible option was to continue using Nancy and Linda’s previously established pre- and post-tests. In the end, we chose citation analysis as it offered
accurate and practical ways to understand and evaluate the ways in which students search for information, the types of sources they chose, and the impact of information literacy instruction (Long and Shrikhande 2010). Based on Long and Shrikhande’s previous work, we developed a rubric (figure 1) evaluating how information was being used (in-text citations, photo attributions), the quality of the citations (correctly following a particular style), and appropriateness of websites (currency, relevance, accuracy, authority). The rubric also included an overall score for the bibliography which looked at scope and relevance. Outside of those rubrics, we also looked into the number of sources used, the types of sources used, and the variety of sources each bibliography presented.

Figure. 1
Information Literacy Rubrics for Assessment of Marketing Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>MEETS EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Text Citations</td>
<td>All necessary in-text citations are in place.</td>
<td>Some in-text citations within the text.</td>
<td>Very few or no in-text citations within the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo Attributions</td>
<td>All necessary photo attributions are in place.</td>
<td>Some photo attributions within the text.</td>
<td>Very few or no photo attributions within the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Citations</td>
<td>Two minor mistakes or less.</td>
<td>More than two minor or a major mistake.</td>
<td>More than one major mistake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style Compliance</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness of Websites</td>
<td>Websites are mostly appropriate.</td>
<td>Websites are somewhat appropriate.</td>
<td>Websites are not appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Quality of the</td>
<td>Bibliography is for the most part</td>
<td>Bibliography is somewhat appropriate,</td>
<td>Bibliography is not appropriate, relevant and/or comprehensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>appropriate, relevant and comprehensive.</td>
<td>appropriate, relevant and comprehensive.</td>
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While the assessment results for Fall 2013 proved the faculty-librarian collaboration to be effective when compared to other sections of the same classes without an embedded librarian, they were nowhere near what we expected them to be: in-text citations were spotty, bibliographies were too short, students mostly used websites, etc. These results seemed to agree with the 1998 study by Morrison et al., which found students believe locating and collecting information to be more important and valuable than critically evaluating it. Clearly, changes needed to be made in our information literacy instruction.

One of the benefits of doing a continuous collaboration is the ability to assess (Strittmater 2012; Garson McGowan 2010; Øvern 2014), change and evolve. In the spring of 2014, I decided to approach instruction differently. I began by changing the format of the information literacy sessions to an active learning environment, which allowed students to better engage with the material (Prince 2004) and also get some of the work done in class. I also decided to reframe my instruction to reinforce concepts like plagiarism and citations, and to include new topics that had
arisen in the previous semester, such as cultural sensitivity. I created handouts to cover this new information. As in the previous semester, I offered unlimited support to students outside of class. On her part Linda tightened and clarified the bibliographic requirements, which helped students have better understanding of what was expected of them. Lastly, Linda and I decided to add more library instruction sessions.

The results were evident from the beginning. Students were more engaged during class, made better use of the outside of class support and their queries were more on topic. This time the embedded experience allowed me and the students to develop a more meaningful relationship. When I conducted the same citation analysis assessment as in the previous semester, the results were vastly improved. While the quality of individual citations continued to be a problem, the presence of citations and the overall quality of the bibliographies were significantly better than in the previous semester. Students also seemed to better understand the relationship between the quality and quantity of sources and the content of their presentations. For the first time, in Spring 2014, I shared the assessment of citations with the students and provided general feedback in a sharing session at the end of the semester. This further increased students’ level of engagement in the class and class projects.

Though AiA formally concluded at the end of the 2013-2014 academic year, Linda and I felt the assessment component of this embedded experience was extremely valuable and therefore worth continuing. In Fall 2014 we decided the previous assessment rubric would now become part of the official evaluation criteria for the assignments and would be reflected in the students’ assignment grade. At this point, I felt the embedded relationship had fully become a co-teaching experience.

This journey of embedded librarianship has not been without its challenges. I came into an already established embedded relationship; it took time to develop trust and understanding between me and Linda, who had been a part of a partnership with Nancy for many years. Also, between preparing for and conducting instruction sessions, attending presentations and providing one-to-one tutoring outside class, the embedded relationship involves a large time commitment. Students sometimes also pose a challenge, as they may not understand why their professor is giving so much class time to the librarian. This may possibly be due to the fact that they do not necessarily view the librarian as an authority figure.

Still, the benefits of embedded librarianship outweighed the challenges. The embedded experience has allowed me to better understand the dynamics of all of Linda’s marketing classes and to adjust instruction to meet its needs. For me, one of the satisfying aspects of embedded librarianship is not only the ability to assess the impact of my instruction sessions but also the opportunity to see the final products in real time.

**FACULTY PERSPECTIVE**

Almost 30 years ago, I wanted my marketing students to become more scholarly, so I contacted the library for tours, instruction, and support. The idea stemmed from my wish to broaden the students’ view and understanding of the world around them and of the variety of information available to them. I was hopeful that the students would get a better sense of the
wealth of information available, and how to find it and integrate it into their minds, education, and assignments. I was also interested in strengthening my students’ critical thinking skills as these are extremely important in marketing education (Chonko 1993; Chonko and Roberts 1995). By teaching critical thinking skills to our students, we are creating better decision makers in the workforce (Braun 2004).

In the beginning, I arranged for visits to the library where Nancy Dennis or another librarian would print resources for research on their marketing assignments. Over the years Nancy offered more support during the semester. Discipline-specific databases and supporting materials were added to the collection. A wonderful relationship developed between the faculty, the librarians and the students, which continued when Marcela came on board.

A major milestone was the AiA initiative, which began in the fall of 2013. Having that component has resulted in more conscious instruction from the librarians, who continued to tailor the sessions to what the students needed. With each semester that passes, Marcela seems to gain a better understanding of what they are missing and how to get it to them. Assessment has helped me adjust the assignments and grading to obtain better results. In particular, I now spend more time explaining the assignment requirements and evaluation criteria, which is helpful for assignments requiring high critical thinking skills (Celuch and Slama 2000). Having the librarians evaluate the presentations alerts me to issues I may not be aware of and gives me more insight into my students’ critical thinking skills. All of these have strengthened our working relationship and improved our teamwork ability.

This partnership has not been without its challenges. Sometimes, they come from students who resist the library resources and revert to Google. For the most part, working with the library has resulted in more educated and learned students with a broader base of knowledge, how to find information and the value of it; some still struggle with using it ethically and correctly. Students do not always cite properly, although they are taught otherwise. We also received some backlash from an administrator who wanted to reduce my class contact with the librarians, not understanding the significance and depth of what we do.

Overall, this has been a wonderful experience that has evolved into a true co-teaching, collaborative effort and program, which is a thread throughout the course and class. We’ve gone from a day at the library to priceless in-depth, in-class guidance, instruction, support and motivation with clearly better results and students who are far more scholarly, broader thinkers, and harder workers. They have learned that all information is not equal, that easy is not necessarily better, and that there is tremendous support at Salem State University for the educational process.

Sociology

Over the course of several years Tara Fitzpatrick has had the opportunity to work with Professor Tiffany Chenault’s Urban Sociology (SOC 341) and Social Inequality (SOC 347) classes. These sociology courses have a well-defined research assignment with specialized research needs and, therefore, provide the perfect opportunity for faculty-librarian collaboration in order to improve student learning outcomes (including those involving information literacy).
What started as a one-shot instruction session has evolved into a true experiment in embedded librarianship. The collaboration has also provided the opportunity to try new instruction and support techniques, and a chance for informal assessment. Most recently, it included participation in the Wikipedia Education Program in collaboration with the American Sociological Association (ASA).

This collaboration is aided by the fact that sociology lends itself to embedded librarianship because of the strong foundations for information literacy already in place and the nature of the discipline itself. Caravello et al. (2008) point out that librarians and faculty are already provided with a common ground because of the similar student learning outcomes found in the Association of College and Research Libraries-Anthropology and Sociology Section (ACRL-ANSS) Information Literacy Standards for Anthropology and Sociology Students (endorsed by the ASA) and the ASA’s Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated document. Additionally, the very definition of critical sociological thinking ties into the principles and skills of information literacy, making the integration a natural fit.

LIBRARIAN PERSPECTIVE

Each year I look forward to being embedded in Urban Sociology (SOC 341) and Social Inequality (SOC 347) courses and continuing my six year collaboration with Tiffany Chenault of the Sociology Department. I began my work with Tiffany’s Urban Sociology and Social Inequality courses with one-shot instruction sessions in 2009 after becoming the department’s subject specialist in Spring 2008. In these courses the students typically work in groups and are either engaged in an in-depth and experiential analysis of a Boston neighborhood (SOC 341) or they are engaged in researching thought-provoking questions relating to inequality (SOC 347). Our collaboration progressed into two sessions with each course (one instruction, one research help). When we realized we were covering too much in one session for the information to be retained, we expanded to several instruction sessions in which I would teach various information literacy concepts tailored to their assignments. These sessions included such topics as: searching for government statistics, searching for and evaluating news sources, political fact-checking, and website evaluation. Then I followed up with more sessions where we both assisted students with their research. A faculty-librarian collaboration in sociology at the University of Otago found that a more structured approach to embedding is preferred in order to combat students’ research anxiety and that students do best when mastering a graduated series of skills in the program (Proctor et. al 2005). This approach is what has ultimately worked for us on a course level as well.

As my collaboration with Tiffany’s courses evolved, I have seen that the benefits for all involved greatly outweigh any challenges we may encounter. The biggest challenge we face is time. Embedded librarianship is by its very nature time-consuming; for me that means it cannot be done for every class and it adds to an already busy instruction load serving four disciplines. Another challenge is that it is a constant work in progress: you have to be able and willing to adapt at the ready. Finally, this level of collaboration will not work for every class.

Benefits are plentiful. Being embedded informs my teaching. By working so closely with the students over an extended period of time, I am able to learn from what I see them struggle
with and do well with. If students are having trouble with a concept, I can address it almost immediately, in real-time. I can also apply what I learn to instruction in other courses. Seeing their work through from start to finish and getting the complete context of the class is tremendously rewarding. My embedded work enables me to take my use of LibGuides as an instruction tool to another level. The scope of the assignments led to in-depth, customized guides designed for each class with resources at students’ fingertips and coverage of each information literacy skill being addressed. Tiffany is a proponent of technology so she appreciated what the comprehensive LibGuides could do for the students’ specific research needs. Embedded librarianship allows me to go beyond basic information literacy topics, experiment with new tools and active learning exercises as well. For example, I have used a word cloud app for a group brainstorming exercise and used interactive online class polling in an exercise evaluating for bias in news headlines. These unique opportunities for experimentation and teachable moments are a result of ample class time and the in-depth knowledge of student needs and course content I am able to acquire only through embedded librarianship.

Embedded librarianship allowed me to conduct informal analysis of student citations, and get a better sense of my impact on student learning outcomes. Students had group presentations as a final; I attended these and received bibliographies from the professor over two semesters for four classes. My informal analysis helped me see what concepts students were struggling with. It also gave me some insight into the effectiveness of the LibGuides and lessons. I offered to share results with Tiffany. This strengthened our collaboration as it increased our course planning dialogue and we were able to adjust timing of teaching various topics (or even add a topic) to improve student retention of skills. For example, we found that citing in slides was poor and for images non-existent. We could then adjust assignment expectations, and work on improvement next semester. Overall, my embedded work has given me takeaways that I could not get otherwise, providing insight into instruction methods as well as student learning.

In Spring 2015, my embedded role increased to co-teaching levels in order to support SOC 341’s participation in the Wikipedia Education Program. We met one day a week for “library lab” where we worked on information literacy concepts, research, and the Wikipedia editing process. This semester, more than ever, Tiffany and I were in constant communication: planning, sharing ideas, discussing how a class session went or how a particular student is doing, reevaluating and adapting as needed. Cassidy and Hendrickson speak about the librarian’s work with the students shaping the professor’s assignment approach and information literacy assumptions, the resulting updated assignments may lead to requests for new means of instructional support from the librarian. Ultimately, all involved benefit from this collaboration and “unique feedback loop” (2013, 462). Our collaboration has evolved over time and this feedback loop/dialogue is indeed unique and crucial. As a result, our course assignments, teaching practices, and supporting materials readily adapt with each new semester. Additional literature discusses the importance of embedding information literacy into an academic course rather than having it as an “add-on” so that students are more likely to retain information becoming lifelong learners. (Proctor et al. 2005, 154) Tiffany and I have found this to be true. Over time, my role has increased from one-shot instruction on basics, to multiple information literacy instruction sessions and embedded research assistance, to a co-teaching experience. We both benefit from our embedded experience. Most importantly, so do our students, who are better supported and in the end better prepared to conduct quality sociological research.
FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

I first reached out to our newly appointed subject specialist librarian, Tara Fitzpatrick, in the fall semester of 2009 as students started to write papers, weekly critiques and other assignments and I saw that they did not know how to properly cite information or find reliable sources. The partnership developed from wanting students to develop critical sociological thinking. Grauerholz and Bouma-Holtrop (2003, 491) define this “as the ability to evaluate, reason, and question ideas and information while demonstrating awareness of broader social and cultural contexts.” It was important to partner with the Social Sciences Librarian to help cultivate students’ information literacy as they develop their sociological knowledge. Also knowing that Tara had a degree in sociology and understood the field of sociology made it easier to develop a partnership around goals and projects for classes. My expectations at first were minimal. I thought a librarian would spend an extensive amount of time on how to cite, find information, and decipher reliable sources. Little did I realize the extent and knowledge of information that would be given. Nor did I know about LibGuides and how they can be customized for each class and the wealth of resources and experiences a librarian could bring and add to class. We started off meeting once or twice throughout the semester. In the beginning, Tara would create a LibGuide and teach students how to effectively use information. We realized that students would not retain the information because too much was given to them in a short amount of time. As we started to work more together we realized that we needed to meet with more frequency throughout the semester and embed information literacy into the class curriculum.

The SOC 341 and SOC 347 classes are taught regularly, and experimenting with assignments and in the classroom keeps material fresh and allows for new insights and collaboration. As a sociologist it is important to teach students the value of community based and public sociology, especially in my Urban and Social Inequality courses that address issues of individual and structural inequalities around race, gender, class, and place. Students need to not only understand these concepts but have the knowledge and skills to critically evaluate and use this information and convey it to the public. Collaboration with Tara is important for this reason. I like to produce work that goes back to the community. In my classes I have done service learning projects (a learning and teaching strategy that integrates reflection, instruction, and meaningful community service to strengthen communities into a class), used wikis, blogs, and even added to Wikipedia. Through this partnership I have enhanced my teaching pedagogy to include active learning and collaboration with the librarian. For example, in 2012 my Social Inequality class did a service learning project with the local Community Development Coalition (CDC) around voting rights and inequality for the presidential election. Students had to do a neighborhood tour, act as poll monitors, make phone calls, and provide a resource guide about the candidates and issues that specially impacted this community. This resource guide was given to the CDC for all the community to use. In support of this assignment Tara developed a LibGuide about finding non-biased information about candidates and political issues. She helped students with finding local and national data, evaluating reliable sources, and proper citations of their sources. We worked together throughout the semester. Tara came to students’ final presentations and evaluated their use of resources. In my Urban Sociology course we have worked together on neighborhoods in the city of Boston. Tara helped students use the appropriate criteria for gathering information about neighborhoods in the city. We discussed how to cite photographs and where to find information from government sources, newspapers, and
even blogs. She even contacted the U.S. Census to have someone come in and explain how neighborhood data is gathered to assist us with teaching the course. In the Spring 2015 section of Urban Sociology we decided to improve the content of various Boston neighborhood Wikipedia pages. Throughout the semester we met once a week for “library lab” time. In that time instruction was given regarding each step of the Wikipedia evaluating and editing process, as well as information literacy concepts and sociological research.

Having an embedded librarian in my courses has been extremely beneficial. Tara helps me relate and apply sociological themes/concepts with information literacy. With our collaboration we are able to discuss and work on projects that will combine our expertise. I think of Tara as a co-teacher for my classes. We are able to meet before the semester and discuss ideas about class and how to organize and implement them so students will be able to link, implement, and apply their sociological knowledge and information literacy. We are able to divide work and become more productive with our resources and time. We discuss the learning outcomes we want to achieve for each class. In addition we work on how to shape and plan the curriculum of the class. Students benefit by having someone else to help them with course content. They have another “expert” to go to in the class. Teaching-wise it helps with content and information. I am able to spend more time helping students understand themes, concepts, and implementation of information. Tara can help them with research and resources. The only challenge I have is balancing class time and library lab time. Trying to find the middle ground of making sure there is enough course time spent on the sociological content and time to work on their information literacy skills and research is always a work in progress.

In sociology we discuss applied knowledge. Research and methodology is a big part of our discipline. Students’ integration of information literacy is essential especially for “controversial” topics that I teach such as racism, sexism, classism, inequality, and white privilege. They learn to analyze, evaluate, and critique the information that they read. As we become more diverse and global it is becoming more and more important for sociology students to be equipped to handle the cultural, social, and political demands of the information that bombards them on a daily basis. The relationship that I have with our librarian is beneficial to myself, the students, and discipline of sociology. Our collaboration continues to help students understand the link of “inequalities” and the importance of assessing information to understand sociology and the global world that they live in.

**Communications**

The broad and interdisciplinary nature of communications makes it an ideal candidate for the collaborative partnership of an embedded librarian. What makes this innovation particularly valuable is its tendency to refine, deepen and expand from the pedagogical strategies that take place inside a classroom to the collaborative research line, convention presentation, and publication that can flourish outside the classroom walls. Cathy Fahey and Professor Robert Brown collaborate on four courses in the public relations concentration: COM 349 Principles of Public Relations, COM 450 Advanced Public Relations Writing, COM 456 Crisis Communications in Public Relations, and COM 510 Experiential Learning in Public Relations.
LIBRARIAN PERSPECTIVE

Our collaboration started with a one-shot library instruction sessions for two sections of COM 349 Principles of Public Relations in September 2007. Even then, I knew this would not be the same as other classes. Rob asked me to introduce the students to Twitter (which had just launched in 2006) and the notion of professional social media communication. Over the years, more sessions per semester were added, as were visits to other classes, particularly COM 450 Advanced Public Relations Writing, COM 456 Crisis Communications in Public Relations, and COM 510 Experiential Learning in Public Relations. On average, two courses run each semester, and I visit each course between 4-6 times.

Our collaboration has gone beyond the traditional one-shot information literacy session to an embedded collaboration within the concentration. By working closely with the students in the public relations concentration, I am able to teach them database skills, and expand into the necessary digital literacy skills the students need to be competitive in the workforce. There is a close relationship between information literacy and digital literacy, despite being two distinct skill sets (Cordell 2013). In these collaborative classes, I blur the line between them even more, because of the learning outcomes for the class. The basic ACRL definition of information literacy is the ability to “find, retrieve, analyze, and use information.” If I were to narrowly limit this definition to an academic library/research database context, I would be doing my students a disservice. Through the concept of personal branding (Schwabel 2009), students learn how to promote themselves online, which allows them to engage with public relations professionals on various social media platforms.

Within these classes, Rob and I developed ways of teaching through and with Twitter, using it as a professional development tool for the students and also as a way to boost in-class engagement with the materials and concepts learned in their introduction to public relations classes. Our partnership melds my skill and enthusiasm with social media and technology with Rob’s years of experience in the public relations industry and the classroom: he shows the why and the principles behind social media communication, and I show the how. Our work on Twitter in the classroom lead to a presentation at NERCOMP in 2012 titled “Transforming tweets: A classroom case study.”

Embedded librarianship, collaboration, or team teaching (it does not matter what it’s called, the function is the same) is an evolving relationship. It is not something that you can jump into, there has to be a gradual buildup, and you cannot go into a one-shot session expecting that it will develop into a co-teaching embedded experience. At the same time, you have to be open to the possibility. When I was a new hire in 2007, I was not expecting to be part of such a team, but now I cannot imagine a semester without it.

As a librarian, most of my interactions with students are 90 minute, one time visits. Occasionally, I will see a student twice in a one-shot, and even more rare, one come to my office for an in-depth research consultation. I see my public relations students grow and develop over the years; I get to know them as people, not just students working on papers. Similarly, I know most of the one-shot professors via the papers and texts they assign. Rob and I are not just colleagues; we’re friends, collaborators, partners. The human impact of embedded librarianship is not quantifiable, but it is the most important part of my experience.
FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

The discovery of the meeting of the minds and sensibilities offers 360-degree professional-development enrichment for faculty and librarian, for students, for the Department of Communications and the institution of the library. Perhaps more than any other academic discipline—even Interdisciplinary Studies—Communication has been, and continues to be, on the cutting edge of the information-communication revolution.

The theoretical and applied subcultures of communications (media literacy, communication studies, journalism, public relations, media production and advertising) are heavily invested in the concepts, strategies, tools, technologies and behaviors that comprise our era of digital and social-media communication.

Teaching and learning themselves have been transformed from sage-on-the-stage/top-down teaching, to the twenty-first century ethos of engagement, sharing, and constant connectedness. As a result, the locus of control for teachers has shifted radically from the individual to the network. The new generation of students, variously described as Generation W (wired) and Generation C (connected), manifest a learning style that can no longer be served most effectively by the individual professor operating within the university’s legacy of silos.

In our innovation-and-technology driven digital-social era, the communications professor’s natural partner and ally is the librarian. Like the wired, available, accessible, connected communications professor, the librarian has been transformed from book-and-print culture to the connected world.

I arrived at Salem State University in the mid-1990s, keenly aware that a digital communications wave was rolling into shore— and that I had better learn to surf it. This is why I began reaching out to my colleagues who I recognized to be best positioned to partner with. These were, and are, the librarians: the most information-literate, and efficient and effective researchers on my campus or any campus.

My first partnership was with a librarian who co-developed with me a pre-and-post digital information literacy test for students. After that librarian took a leave from the university, I reached out to Cathy Fahey, recognizing that, in the best interests of my digital-hungry students, and my own publishing career, I needed a partner. By then, the digital wave was becoming hypercharged by the tectonic shift we know as social media.

My expectations were nothing short of aspirational. I was soon rewarded. Quickly noting Cathy’s info-social-graphic-research breadth and depth, as well as her cultural sophistication and quick wit, I knew I’d struck gold. Cathy developed into a full-fledged teaching partner, a relationship that flourished creatively into convention-presentation collaborations that explore the connections between pedagogy and social media.

The deeper background of my expectations grew out of my growing awareness that the running stream between the way my students searched for, valued, accessed, grasped, and
communicated information had become a gulf and was widening into an ocean. It was more than my aspiration that moved me to welcome an embedded librarian, it was simply not wanting to drown in that sea.

The social-digital-sharing revolution has transformed the model of teaching and learning into a library-information-finding-vetting-feedback loop. What learning looks like now—on both ends (students and professors)—is robustly informed by radically new information-communication behaviors, notably innumerable student dives into websites, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other visuals in our visually driven age (Junco 2011). For this and other reasons I often run a Twitter feed behind me when I’m in the classroom to enable engagement with the world inside the classroom and outside its wall, around the globe.

With the new dominance of statistically driven assessment, we find ourselves beginning to explore the traditional self-reported survey instruments to assess student engagement with disciplinary-related social media tools such as Twitter. The next phase of assessment will look to capitalize on the analytic tools, some of which are free.

Like most well-matched partners, our partnership developed from A then B to A/B. In other words, from my solo to Cathy’s solo, to what now has become more of a real-time, in-class duet. My experience in the classroom (20 years at Salem State, and many more years at a half-dozen other colleges and universities) draws on what the behavioral psychologist Albert Mehrabian (1968) called “immediacy behaviors,” a range of in-the-moment verbal and gestural actions on that performance stage that is the classroom.

While the university encourages collaborations across disciplines, the indigestible legacy of contractual agreements, turf-protection, and bureaucratic roadblocks continue to make the aspirational goal of faculty-librarian collaborations problematic. Librarianship has progressed (some would say “evolved”) from what it was before the digital-social waves into what it is now: pedagogy, and formal or informal strategic alliances with faculty. Only librarians do not stand on equal footing with faculty in terms of general perception or professional-development and scholarly opportunity.

Were I University Czar, I would form a commission to rewrite librarian contracts to capitalize on the barely realized opportunities for teaching and learning across the university campus.

**Discussion**

All three collaborative experiences in this paper highlight the benefits of embedded librarianship. Being embedded in the courses has led all four librarians to a more meaningful relationship with students. Their continuous presence in the classroom helps reinforce some of the notions and behaviors introduced during the information literacy instruction sessions. As Garson and McGowan (2010) put it, “co-teaching is an iterative process, and each class affirms the instructional goals to explain and highlight the interplay of conducting research and producing research” (21).
Embedded librarianship combats the siloing effect that is common in academia. By working closely with faculty and students, the librarians are able to see the commonalities that exist between the language of librarianship and the language of the discipline. For Tara, this means aligning information literacy with critical sociological thinking. It is about going beyond database instruction to “using sociological concepts and bringing sociological concerns to the research process and to the critical evaluation and use of information” (Caravello et al. 2008, 10). For Cathy, it meant using information literacy concepts to discuss media and digital literacy, broadening its definition to go beyond the filtering of, and protecting users from, negative content to becoming strategic users, consumers and creators of digital content, in other words, fully engaged digital citizens (Park 2012). Librarians are also able to learn more about their assigned disciplines. For Marcela, who did not have a business background, this experience has helped her better serve not only the students in the embedded courses but all students in the discipline.

For faculty, partnering with librarians allows them to offer their students a more well-rounded education, going beyond teaching the discipline and into teaching transferable skills. Cathy and Rob’s collaboration focuses on writing for social media, a skill that students will need in their professional (Katz et al. 2010) and personal lives. Students learn from Rob the nuances of the message of their tweet (voice, tone, audience) and from Cathy the technical (character count, appropriate hashtags, linking, @ replies). While Tiffany and Tara’s sociology students are learning about inequalities in society, they also learn that inequalities exist in information and the importance of evaluating the information they are bombarded with each day. They actively apply these skills through service learning projects or as Wikipedia editors. Students of International Marketing get a chance to discuss cultural intelligence and sensitivity in addition to learning about business and research. Being part of these discussions is also a perk for librarians, who have a chance to go beyond just teaching information literacy skills.

For everyone involved, embedded librarianship provides insight into what their partners do and how it helps their students. This particularly important for librarians as faculty are often unaware of the services they offer and the help they can provide (Meulemans and Carr 2012).

There is no one formula for a successful faculty-librarian collaboration but certain practices can help one develop. The key to a successful embedded course experience lies in the strength of the faculty-librarian partnership. A robust faculty-librarian partnership can enhance instruction to improve students’ critical thinking and information skills (Cassidy and Hendrickson 2013). The collaborations at Salem State University are years in the making, constantly evolving and strengthening. Another useful practice found in the literature suggests that embedded librarians should strive to become immersed in the culture and spaces of users and offer convenient and user-friendly services outside library settings (Kvenild 2011). For Marcela, Nancy, and Cathy this meant meeting the classes in their regular classrooms at a separate campus. For Tara it meant going to the students to assist with research.

Assessment, whether formal or informal, is helpful for both faculty and librarians. It allows librarians to measure the effectiveness of their teaching and demonstrate the benefits of the partnership for faculty, making them more willing to participate in the collaboration (Øvern 2014). Faculty, on their part, can use assessment to justify giving librarians a good portion of their class time. Assessment also helps librarians discover the needs of the course/students. With
this knowledge they can customize the experience and tailor it to the specific needs of the course and its students, thereby providing needs based services that will enhance the educational experience (Kvenild 2011).

Finally, for these partnerships to be successful, librarians must assert themselves and take an active role in the course. While faculty are usually the ones who initiate the process, it is only by establishing an equal and reciprocal collaboration that these experiences thrive (Meulemans and Carr 2012).

As demonstrated in this paper, there are many different options for embedding. Because each embedded experience is tailored to the needs of the faculty and students, and because each librarian brings different strengths and strategies, there is no wrong way to embed. With that said, there are best practices to take from our experiences and professional literature on the topic. For embedded librarianship in a course to be effective, collaboration, communication, and trust between faculty and librarian are key. This means collaborators need to be in it for the long-haul, not just for the semester but beyond. For all involved (students included), embedded librarianship is also about building relationships and achieving a deeper understanding of each other’s needs and roles. If this is done effectively, the link between discipline specific concepts and information literacy is made clear. Embedded librarianship is a unique form of collaboration available to faculty and librarians—the fact that it is constantly evolving means it is adaptable for anyone who wants to try it to make it their own.

**Endnotes**


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