


4-27-2007

Elements of collaboration: A retrospective look at marketing a program of core information competencies

Jeanne M. Brown

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, jeanne.brown@unlv.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#), and the [Organizational Communication Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Brown, J. M. (2007). Elements of collaboration: A retrospective look at marketing a program of core information competencies. *35th Annual Art Libraries Society of North America Conference 4*. Art Libraries Society of North America.

https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles/98

This Conference Proceeding is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Conference Proceeding in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Conference Proceeding has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

**Elements of Collaboration: A Retrospective Look at marketing a Program of Core Information Competencies
OR 10 elements that may or may not lead to faculty collaboration success!**

Jeanne Brown ARLIS/NA 35th Annual Conference April 26-30, 2007

First let me start with what this is NOT. This is not a description of the project to develop core information competencies for students in design disciplines. If you are interested in the core competencies and how they were developed, they are posted, along with some of the process, in the online publications section of the ARLIS web site.

What this IS is a description of some of the elements that have contributed to bright spots in my efforts to convince the UNLV School of Architecture faculty to incorporate the competencies throughout the architecture, interiors and landscape programs – and to include the librarian as a part of and partner in this educational endeavor.

I fully recognize that each situation is in many ways unique, composed of personalities of both librarian and faculty as well as programmatic factors. I hope you will find some ideas in this presentation that you can apply to your own unique situations.

Element 1: Persistence and repetition.

The first time I introduced the concept of skills throughout the curriculum was several years before the group project on core competencies in the design discipline started. Back when Adil was the architecture program coordinator around the turn of the century! I drafted something re architecture (this is the foundation that led to the group project).

I presented the original draft to the entire faculty some time after Adil left. The landscape guy not happy as he saw it as too architecture oriented (rather sensitive). This was one of the factors inspiring me to bring together a group of librarians each to take one discipline. After our work and much revision, I brought it back to faculty after all three disciplines drafted. Interiors guy VERY enthused. The faculty directed me to draft a proposal and take it to the curriculum committee, which I did. This was at the beginning of the 2006-2007 year.

The curriculum committee did not meet the entire first semester. Someone else took over leadership of curriculum committee; it finally met. I brought in the proposal. Interiors guy so enthused he asked me to speak to his class. Landscape guy still not happy. Revised the proposal! Will it be in next fall's syllabi? – don't know yet!

Element 2: Flexibility.

2a. Go for soft [receptive] targets.

I have worked with individual faculty to address specific competencies at specific levels, though my real goal is a complete 1st year through grad program where competencies are introduced then reinforced throughout. Each of these collaborations is relatively long-standing. The first is a collaboration with the architecture history faculty member. The 2nd

is with the 4th year lecturer for Architecture Place and Identity. Each collaboration is unique. Each can be used to promote the value of collaboration to others. Each collaborator is a voice in faculty meetings for the need to teach information skills.

2b. Take what you can get.

Previously the 1st year Design Fundamentals class came for a tour and introduction to using the online catalog. This year a new instructor took over. No tour. My next approach was to lobby to get an assignment whereby the students explore the “Finding Resources” modules so that they know what’s on the web page, on the assumption that when they actually need it they will remember and consult. What actually happened: the faculty member came up with a treasure hunt type assignment : (Since this idea occurred at the same time as ACRL, I wasn’t there to head him off. I am now cumulating the results of a survey he allowed me to give the students in this class to explore what they learned in the project and how it affected their view of the library. Hopefully we can revise the project for next year!

Element 3: Know your faculty.

The more you know about specific concerns the more you can target your suggestions to areas where faculty are likely to be receptive. Plagiarism is a good example. When the first year faculty member mentioned that students in his class were turning in whole web pages without citing, I offered to incorporate plagiarism discussion into my next class for this level students – which was quite well received.

Another example is the recent wave of concern about global warming. I am hoping to parlay that into some session for the Environmental Controls class, but meanwhile I have used it as the topic for a first year class assignment, which pleased both faculty and students.

Element 4: Show results.

Use learning outcomes to focus. Document results through multiple means – triangulate – such as the before / after sheet, a class assignment, an end-of- semester assessment. Then share the results with faculty – which is in itself a form of collaboration. Remember the treasure hunt assignment I mentioned? Well I got agreement from the faculty to survey the students on what they had learned, what their view of the library was after the assignment, and what their suggestions might be for next year. I then shared the results with he and his GAs – very positive experience, though definitely the assignment had some problems!

Element 5: Seize the day.

Be on the lookout for opportunities to reinforce your message or generate a partnership. The mini-grants story, an institutional opportunity provided by the TLC and the Libraries. I used it to suggest to a couple of my faculty, potential collaborations and although the money was meager it did provide incentive to one of them [thank goodness they didn’t all take me up on it! The end result: an image copyright tutorial, which otherwise would have been much longer in coming and being accepted, a strong sense of the librarian as educational partner, and groundwork for future joint projects.

Another example: an article titled “Teach student to go for quality not convenience” appeared in the UNLV faculty newsletter. It was basically an article about the perils of wikipedia. I could have left it in faculty mailboxes, but instead I took it to the next faculty meeting [monthly, I always present a library report]. This allowed me to discuss the importance of students evaluating sources AND the successful session I had recently given to the interiors class on just that topic. This has not led to additional invitations to teach, but I believe has laid yet more groundwork for a consensus that an integrated information competencies program is important.

Element 6: Quid pro quo. Although education for its own sake would seem to be a sufficient motivation, sometimes you can sweeten the pot. Architecture faculty are interested in demonstrating learning outcomes, both to the campus and to the accrediting team. My outcomes-assignments-assessments can add to the documentation. And of course I offer to grade the assignments. Recently I proposed a joint article to one of the faculty. His reply: “I smell merit!” It may sometimes be a stretch to see what we librarians can offer to encourage collaboration, but it’s doable. Sometimes a favor – like teaching a class when the faculty member is off to conference – may not be immediately returned, but it is like money in the bank! I suppose it is fairly obvious that I do not see that collaboration must be 50-50. Each of use must decide what we can live with, and judge effort in relation to return.

Element 7: Capitalize on the personal. Nothing is more effective than relationships. And developing those relationships can take so many different forms. Coffee. Shared research interests. Lunch. Knowing the rules on retirement medical care. And I can’t tell you how much capital I garnered from setting up a faculty art show in the ASL! Sometimes there is a direct line between a lunch and a project or an instruction opportunity, sometimes there isn’t. But you wouldn’t expect that, would you?

Element 8: Nurture your creds. Credibility is one of our ace cards. Know what you want to accomplish, be it in a specific class or overall. Develop expertise that will be valued. Knowing what you are talking about can translate into being acknowledged as a player when the topic is introduced.

Remember that first year class in which I covered plagiarism that I mentioned earlier? And the image copyright module I developed as my part of a mini-grant? Both led to me being included in the team to consider a plagiarism policy for the school and ways to be sure all students are familiar with the principles [info comps]. As an aside, I believe that copyright and plagiarism are two areas where librarians have expertise that many faculty do not, and that is valued.

Element 9: Be grounded in the discipline and the issues of the discipline. The need to come to grips with the flood of information is certainly one which resonates with the field of architecture. In fact, the ACSA Task Force on Education has life-long learning and the explosion of knowledge as two of the critical areas to address in architecture education in the next few years. That has served to lend weight to my general lobbying efforts. The

ACSA stress on interdisciplinary investigation is one I have used to promote library instruction at the graduate level, supported by the professional architect who teaches the course since he sees the challenges of speaking the lingo of various client groups.

Element 10: Enlist the students. Promotion to student groups. I'd love to have the AIAS demand that information competencies be addressed, or invite me to have Saturday workshops on information skills. I can't tell you that has happened! Would you believe me if I did??! But I have shared the competencies with student leaders. I have begun a "coffee initiative" whereby I invite selected students to coffee and discuss their impressions of the library, their needs, and their insights into how I can best approach communication with the students. Because let's face it – unless we ask we just don't know what they're thinking [and sometimes even *after* we ask we don't know!]

I have also surveyed maybe 25% of the SOA students as to their sense of the importance of ten selected information skills and their perceived skill level. Strangely enough the one question where most were confident they had adequate skills was the one on copyright and plagiarism. I have shared those results with faculty who were – what word should I use? Appalled? Amazed? – to see the students perceptions so at variance with their own!

And on that note I will close. I hope this has been useful!