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WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES: A GUIDE FOR FACULTY-LIBRARIAN COLLABORATION

Faculty:

Develop a research project (or projects) that includes specific learning goals for disciplinary research. Break down the project into scaffolded smaller assignments and steps. Think about specific learning goals connected to disciplinary research.

Librarian + Faculty

Meeting 1:

- Work with your librarian to hone outcomes for assessment of the learning goals connected to disciplinary research (i.e. “Use criteria to evaluate and select resources” or “Integrate research into a written assignment or presentation effectively”).
- Develop a simple assessment tool whereby you together will judge whether the goals were met. This may be a student survey or other opportunity for students to reflect on their learning. It may also involve assessment of the writing: What will you look for in the final products in order to determine the degree to which students have met the goals?
- Look at assignment together. Where do students typically struggle when it comes to disciplinary research in general and/or this project (if assigned before)? Where will students need the most support?

Meeting 2:

- Together develop a plan for supporting students--ideally some blend of whole-group and small group presentation with one-on-one meetings and in-class work time with the librarian present for individual assistance.
- Put group presentations and in-class work days on the course syllabus; the faculty member should be present on these days. Also, schedule dates when the faculty member will check in with the librarian on student progress.
- Make individual meetings with the librarian either required or optional (extra credit) for students, but either way, require students to write brief reflections after each visit that are evaluated in some low-stakes way (i.e. check, check minus, zero).

Sample reflection prompt for students on meeting with the librarian:

BEFORE THE MEETING:

List specific goals for this session with the librarian:

AFTER THE MEETING:

1. Describe your meeting with the librarian in as much detail as possible:
2. Did you meet the goals you set for this meeting? If so, how? What did you learn? If not, why not?
3. List some specific action steps you will take (and when) as a result of this meeting. *It is important that these action steps be specific.*

Some points to keep in mind for successful faculty-librarian collaborations:

- Research and writing are both developmental processes, not one-shot fixes. This is why the stand-alone presentation on library resources is not as effective as multiple targeted interventions at different points in the research process.
- It is important for faculty to allow librarians (and librarians to allow themselves) to go beyond showing tools and focus on critical thinking. The goal for students as writers is to encourage them to see the writing process in a more complex way (not just about correctness). Likewise, we want to encourage students to see the research process in a more complex way (not just citation tools such as RefWorks).
- For this partnership to work, it is important for the faculty member to maintain an open attitude toward the educational process and to sharing expertise with the librarian.
- Timing is key! It is not very effective to bring in the librarian when there is no specific assignment connected to what students will be doing. Target interventions for maximum impact.
- Incorporating support for the writing process requires faculty to change their ideas about “coverage” of course material: writing becomes seen as a *means* of covering material rather than as an obstacle. In the same way, it helps for faculty to see support for the research process not as something that takes valuable class time, but as time invested in meeting important course goals connected to students learning disciplinary research concepts and skills.