

Where ALIA's Research Advisory Committee brings you news from the world of library and information services research.

FROM OUR COLLECTION:

Ferer, E (2012) Working Together: Library and Writing Centre Collaboration. *Reference Services Review*, (40)4, 543–557.

Campbell, K, Ellis, M & Adebonojo, L (2012) Developing a Writing Group for Librarians: The Benefits of Successful Collaboration. *Library Management*, (33)1/2, 14–21.

THE WRITE WAY TO COLLABORATE

Writing is the theme of this LIS Investigations column – at first glance, not a natural partner with this issue's feature on collaboration, as writing is seen by many as a solitary endeavour. But of course, writing and libraries are natural partners, as indeed are research and writing. This three-way relationship is the focus of Ferer's investigation into collaborations between academic libraries and writing centres.

Ferer's research aim was to identify the range of activities embraced by libraries and writing centres when working together, to identify best practice. Both these academic services are established to support students and help them succeed in a scholarly environment and, not surprisingly, have a history of collaboration. The methodological approach was a review of the research literature published in English between 1999 and 2012. Ferer cautions that the results are somewhat skewed, as much of the literature reviewed is published by librarians rather than writing centre staff; the literature is overwhelmingly American.

A summary of the results of the review is grouped around five themes: outreach and partnership, building relationships, sharing space, providing services in each other's space, and jointly designing teaching modules and workshops. Interestingly, librarians providing services within the writing centre was one initiative for which results were mixed, although one library at least reported their services in the writing centre were well-received, as they were able to catch students seeking assistance at the very beginning of their research activity.

The brief discussion focuses on the most frequently embraced collaborative activities rather than identifying best practice. More popular collaborative activities included librarians providing writing centre tutors with training in library instructional services; for example on how to manage



citations to enable them to assist students with their research. Other activities highlighted were co-teaching, cross-promotion of services and sharing spaces. Perhaps the most important finding discussed by Ferer is the importance of starting with small scale joint activities, and allowing the larger, more embracing activities, such as combining services in a one-stop shop, to emerge as the relationship develops. While many of these activities are already in place in Australian university libraries, Ferer's findings serve as a handy checklist when considering collaborative activity as a strategy to address the ongoing need to do more with less in delivering library services.

Writing collaborations are also the focus of the work by Campbell, Ellis and Adebonojo. The stimulus for their interest in forming a collaborative writing group in an academic library was the difficulty encountered in carving out time from busy days to write up research for publication.

The authors analysed their own experiences against the published research of what is, they noted, an under-researched field. The result is a list of factors likely to foster successful collaborative writing activities, such as selecting compatible colleagues with whom to collaborate, and practical tips to increase the chances of being accepted for conference presentation or publication. Also valuable is the brief consideration of the pitfalls that may be encountered.

So to all those practising librarians who are keen to share the knowledge they have gained from in-house research activities – have a look at this handy checklist, seek out writing partners with whom to collaborate and tell us about what you've found.

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