

Teaching the Teachers: Workshop for TAs, Tutors & Peer Mentors on Undergraduate Research

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How it all began.....

- **Faculty member:** Sure, you can train my _____ (insert *TAs/tutors/mentors*)!! We believe research skills are an important part of an undergraduate education.
- **Librarian:** Great! When can I meet with your _____ (insert *TAs/tutors/mentors*)?
- **Faculty member:** How about next week? You can have an hour.



Workshop

- **Created by:** Heather Berringer & Sarah Fedko at Carleton University
- **Audience:** TAs for ArtsOne as well as tutors for the Writing Tutorial Centre & other groups of peer mentors
- **Created to:** Help TAs, tutors, and peer mentors develop skills to answer basic research questions from a variety of disciplines and make referrals when appropriate



Agenda

- Goals
- Current Practices
- Design
- Activity
- Results
- Future goals and applications



Goals: Our aims for this project



Goals: For Librarians

- Provide opportunities for one-to-one research assistance that a librarian cannot necessarily provide when working with a large class
- Triage questions to reduce workload and allow librarians to focus on the most in-depth questions
- Market library services, including reference and instruction



Goals: For TAs, Tutors, and Mentors

- Increase skills and confidence so that they can successfully deal with basic research questions
- Teach them to refer students when appropriate
- Apply subject knowledge/tutoring skills to the library environment
- Encourage them to market library services to their students and faculty members



Goals: For Students

- Integrate research help into their classes and tutoring sessions
- Enjoy more opportunities for one-on-one research instruction



Current Practices: Teaching Assistants, Tutors, Peer Mentors



Current practices: Need for service

During this time of change, **librarians need to examine traditional service efficiency and effectiveness** and to explore new models for delivery of information. The **demands for instruction services will continue to explode** as access to information becomes readily available.

(Deese-Roberts & Keeting 13)



Current practices: Adapt to teaching environment

Change from the competitive classroom to a **cooperative, collaborative environment inside and outside the classroom**. The role of the faculty in the traditional instructional model is that of lecturer and expert. In the learning model, **the role of the faculty is to work in partnership with students to design appropriate learning methods and environments**.

(Deese-Roberts & Keeting 13)



Current practices: Support diverse student population

Maintain standards while opening the doors to an increasingly diverse student body. Educators discovered that it is not enough simply to open the doors of higher education; **schools must be willing to provide the academic support necessary to maximize the potential of all their students.**

(Deese-Roberts & Keeting 22)



Current practices: Practices throughout higher education

Tutoring programs have expanded from initial remedial roles to comprehensive service programs, providing assistance to any student, not just those identified as unprepared. Peer assistance with writing, math, science, and languages, in addition to study skills and reading, are common elements of many learning centre tutorial programs.

(Deese-Roberts & Keeting 23)



Current practices: Libraries and Peer-support

- Peer Information Counseling at the University of Michigan Undergraduate Library
- The Reference Assistant Project at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside

(Deese-Roberts & Keeting 28)



Current practices: Practices throughout higher education

Carleton University:

- Teaching Assistants active on campus
- Tutors working at Writing Centre, Learning Support Services, and other peer mentoring organizations to support a variety of core academic skills
- Why not integrate research support into these programs?



Design: Anticipated challenges & Application of Learning Theories



Design: Anticipated Challenges

- **Clear expectations for TAs/ tutors /mentors:**
We felt it was important to have clear expectations of what they would and would not do.
- **Faculty perception:** This provided an opportunity to change some faculty/staff perceptions of librarians as teachers. Show them we can do much more than ‘present databases’.



Design: Anticipated Challenges

- **TA/tutor/mentor motivation:**
 - Make sure we project respect the skills that they do have
 - Motivate them to reconsider research skills from the perspective of teaching.
 - Stop disengage because they feel 'they already learned this stuff' in their own classes



Design: Learning Theory

- Authentic Learning
- Collaborative Learning
- Inquiry Learning



Design

- **Authentic Learning:**

Authentic learning typically **focuses on real-world, complex problems and their solutions**, using role-playing exercises, problem-based activities, case studies, and participation in virtual communities of practice.

(Lombardi & Oblinger)



Design

Skills developed by authentic learning:

- ▶ The *judgment* to distinguish reliable from unreliable information
- ▶ The *patience* to follow longer arguments

(Lombardi & Oblinger)



Design

- ▶ The *synthetic ability* to recognize relevant patterns in unfamiliar contexts
- ▶ The *flexibility* to work across disciplinary and cultural boundaries to generative innovative solutions

(Lombardi & Oblinger)



Design

- **Collaborative Learning:**

Cooperation enhances student satisfaction with the learning experience by actively involving students in designing and completing class procedures and course content.

(Panitz)




Design

► Inquiry Learning:

Students conduct small or large-scale inquiries that enable them to **engage actively and creatively with the questions and problems of their discipline**, often in collaboration with others. IBL approaches include case-study and problem-based learning (PBL) methods as well as research projects of different kinds.

(Panitz)



Activity: Final design of workshop



Activity

- **Time required:** Approximately 1 hour
- **Instructions:** Start by discussing goals of workshop (including expectations for their work with students on research). Participants are split into groups and receive a package of questions.

Groups brainstorm possible responses. Each group presents the questions they were assigned to be ‘the experts’ on, and a conversation ensues between the librarian(s) and participants

- **Follow-up:** At the end of the workshop, participants



Activity: Example Questions

From: Julie_Smith@carleton.ca

To: MyEnglishTA@carleton.ca

Hi! I'm in your Writing 101 class. I've decided to write my essay on the 'effects of smoking on human health'. I tried smoking and effects in the Library Catalogue and didn't get very many books.



Activity: Example Questions

I also need to find articles. I looked under “medicine” and tried searching a database called ‘PubMed’, but my results weren’t very good there either.

Can you tell me what I should type to get better results?

You said we had to write a bibliography for my paper. I went to the library and they said there were different styles of bibliography. (Why?) They gave me guides for APA, MLA, and other stuff. What style am I supposed to use? Thanks J Julie




Activity: Example Questions

From: [Steve Bower@carleton.ca](mailto:Steve_Bower@carleton.ca)

To: MyCanadianStudiesTA@carleton.ca

Subject: No treaty information – am I doing something wrong?



I have a question about my paper. I chose the topic about first nations treaty rights in Canada. I can find all kinds of books at the library about the current situation, but I can't find anything about how all of it started.

When I put “first nations and treaties and canada” into the catalogue I get lots of stuff but none of it talks about treaties in the 1800s and stuff. Did I type the wrong words into the catalogue search or does the library just not buy books about first nations history? Why did the prof assign this topic if there wasn't enough information?
SB

PS-Half the stuff has a weird call number like DDV CA1. What's up with that? Does that mean I have to use it in the library?



Activity: Example Questions

From: cuteasabutton@hotmail.com

To: MyPoliticalScienceTA@carleton.ca

Hi, I'm in your first-year political science class. I have to write an essay comparing all the differences between japanese, american and canadian governments. I don't really have time to go to the library so I want to get articles. I've been trying to find articles but none of them are very good. Do you know what type of government japan has? I thought they had an emperor....bye, suzie



Activity: Support Materials

- **Common Problems in Student Research:** A summary hand-out for review as a follow up to the workshop
 - *This hand-out review ideas addressed during session. Participants can keep it as a 'cheat sheet' for working with students.*



Activity: Support Materials

- **Teaching Assistants Welcome to Carleton University Library:** Phone numbers and tips for making use of services
 - *This hand-out was meant to help participants make effective use of instruction and other library services.*



Activity: Support Materials

- **Made TAs/tutors/mentors aware of materials available to support student research:**

These materials included:

- *Pamphlets*
- *Online guides*
- *Assignment calculator*
- *Web CT support*



Results: Reactions of TAs/Tutors/Mentors, and Faculty & Staff



Results

- **TAs/Tutors/Mentors :**
 - Participants were surprised by complexity of answering research questions
 - Pleased with the workshop and reported they felt more comfortable talking to students about library research
 - Appeared to refer students to the library more often than others (who had not participated in the workshop)



Results

- Assisted with hands-on portion of library seminars. Particularly helpful when working with high needs students (ESL, transition year students)
- Incorporated research skills into their other activities with students
- Brought students for assistance or referred to the relevant subject librarian for support.



Results

- **Faculty/staff overseeing these groups:**
 - Were pleased with the activity
 - Reported that they themselves learned a lot
 - Invited us to present to faculty groups afterwards
 - Started conversations about further collaboration



Future Goals & Applications

- Formal evaluation
- Subject-specific workshops
- Workshops aimed at particular student groups (ESL)
- In-depth integration of information literacy skills throughout TA and tutor training

Any questions?

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