

Hi I have to tell you - I am truly honored and surprised to be here. I never thought that writing books with my colleagues would bring me all the way to British Columbia, but hey, life is full of surprises! Also, I am glad and amazed to see so many people here. Wow – thanks for coming! I hope this proves to be a worthwhile session for all of us. A special thanks to Mark Bodner of Simon Fraser whose unflagging energy and enthusiasm are the reason I am here today!

I don't claim to be a huge authority on collaboration. I have a personal interest in looking at how people behave in organizations, and while casting out for a new book idea about a year and a half ago, my co-writers and I came upon "collaboration" as a possible and plausible topic. It seemed like lots of us (meaning librarians) were doing it (meaning collaboration), or we were being told we needed to be doing it – yet there weren't any how-to books. I am one of those reading learners – I want to read a book and then put into practice what I take from that book – But there weren't any books!

I had taken a Professional Cont. Ed class at the University of NC Chapel Hill Library school a few years ago on collaboration, but there were no standards, no guides. Thus the Building Bridges book. I promise you that this is not a marketing ploy for the book! I know many of you have not and never will read the darn thing. I also feel that, as with most things I write, the second edition is going to be a whole lot better! The book was, in my mind, really a conversation starter – and I don't mean at parties! I mean between each other. We, my co-authors and I, wanted to explore what we mean when we say collaboration – how do we know it when we see it? And what are the qualities of good collaborators and collaborations that work?

We then had to figure out how to answer these questions and as a way to begin we examined collaborations that worked, by taking apart the pieces of them and looking closely, and trying to figure out what made them work. I guess a second part (and that is beyond the scope of this talk) is the need to later look at collaborations that didn't work, or didn't even get off the ground, or that just stayed in someone's brain and never worked, and try to figure out what got in the way of those non-collaborations, if you will. Now that I have preambled a bit let's see what's in store:

First I'll go over the details of three case studies – these are based on real examples and will focus specifically on collaboration beyond the boundaries of the library.

After the case studies, I'll talk a little about what I see are the reasons why these collaborations were successful, but really, I'd like this to be a discussion, and then, perhaps we can create our own definition of what collaboration is, especially for our profession during this time of great change.

Then - given time and interest, we talk about obstacles to collaborations, as well perhaps I'd like to gather your thoughts, ideas, and perhaps some plans for collaborations that you may have for the future.

So, if there are no questions, lets begin.

#### Case Study One – Workshop for Teaching

Who – Instruction librarians at the undergraduate library, interns at the undergraduate library who were grad students in the school of library science, tutors from the writing center who were graduate students from many different departments at the university, including: English, history, biology, sociology with a particular gift at writing and at teaching writing.

What – The director of instruction at the undergraduate library approached the writing center because the library was getting ready to update their plagiarism materials and found that what they did duplicated a lot of what the writing center was doing. So a group of instruction librarians, some of their interns from the library school and assistant directors and tutors from the writing center met to talk about what they did, what their missions were, and where there were areas where they could collaborate. Instead of duplicating effort they would work together to achieve their similar goals. Through their discussions one definite plan began to form – a collaboration team of librarians and writing center tutors would conduct an initial assessment of the needs of multiple departments to see if there was interest in training TA's how to teach

information research and basic writing skills. If the need and desire was there, and they thought it would be, the group would work with each department to create workshops, handouts, or whatever was deemed useful, to teach TA's how to teach undergrads skills in information research and basic writing as appropriate to the subjects the TA's taught. Through their discussion they found that graduate TA's know a lot about their own subjects but are not given training in how to teach these skills. They also know how to do these things themselves, but they don't know how to teach it. It is interesting to note that the collaborators initially met to talk about how they were duplicating stuff. After they met and talked they embarked on a completely new venture – TA workshops, and decided to not worry about the duplication of websites, handouts, etc. They used them for their own purposes and would continue to do so.

How – The group identified 20 departments to contact and ask about their desires and needs as related to training of TAs. They called both the Director of Graduate Studies for each department, and whatever body managed the graduate TA's in that department. They presented their ideas, asked about interest, and expressed *their* interest in working with the department. Every department they contacted was enthusiastic. Based on availability and timing, the group chose to pilot the project with the School of Journalism. They would then branch out from there and use what they learned to set up a more formalized program across the university.

When – First the group met with representatives from the journalism graduate student organization many times early in the fall semester to assess their needs, and the best ways to approach and teach the TA's. They then spent the latter part of the semester creating the workshops: structure, guides, handouts and worksheets that they would use. Early spring semester they held an initial workshop for journalism grad students. They incorporated into it a “how did this go, how is it working for you, how shall we proceed from here” at the end. Based on that assessment they held more workshops at various times not long after the initial one.

Where – The workshops were held in the school of journalism, were attended and conducted by all members of the collaboration group who were able to attend. This first

session was also observed by the Director of the Writing Center, and the School of Journalism's Dir of Grad studies. Based on the assessment and feedback, the workshop was well received and the plan is to branch out to more departments, and include additional collaborators from both the library and the writing center. Because they included the graduate students in the workshop design process they got a lot of buy-in and high attendance.

Outcomes: At this point its hard to tell if overall writing and research skills have improved in u-grads so early in the project. This is something the collaborators will look into as time goes on.

#### Case Study Two – Plagiarism Tutorial

Who: Instruction and subject librarians, library school interns [what is it about interns?], undergraduate students, along with the assistance from faculty, instructional technology specialists, and library web services

What: creating an online plagiarism tutorial accessible to the university community.

Why: A survey on academic dishonesty administered to a sampling of students and faculty at the university revealed some surprising results:

- Nearly half of the students admitted to having collaborated with other students on their work without faculty permission.
- Nearly 40% of the students admitted to having copied a few sentences in their papers without footnoting them in the bibliography.
- Only a third of the students thought that falsifying a bibliography constituted serious cheating, while only a quarter of the students felt that unauthorized collaboration was wrong.
- Two-thirds of the faculty surveyed thought students had a low or very low understanding of the university's policy on student cheating while even more respondents thought that the faculty's own understanding of the policy was inadequate.

In an effort to counter the students' lackadaisical attitude towards academic dishonesty, the university's Council for Academic Integrity (who conducted the survey) approached the library about developing an online plagiarism tutorial.

The library assembled a team to work on the project that consisted of instruction and subject librarians, library school interns from a local state university, and undergraduate students.

How: The team first determined their target audiences. They wanted to reach undergraduates because they are vulnerable to plagiarism. They also wanted to reach faculty through the creation of resources geared towards easy instructional use. Next, the team had to pick a platform for the tutorial. They decided that the final version would have its own stand-alone website. But because web development takes time and the team wanted to make the tutorial available for beta testing, the first version would be posted on Blackboard to allow for easy posting of the content, easy accessibility, and allow for feedback from the group.

They decided on a timeline and used Microsoft Project to create it. The group collaborated closely with the university's Council for Academic Integrity. They also benchmarked other online plagiarism tutorials before they began working in earnest. Members were divided up into smaller groups and assigned different sections to work on. Members of the group shared their work over email so all could edit and comment before posting to Blackboard. The team had regular meetings to make sure everyone was on track and to allow for face time. Scheduling these meetings was a challenge because there were 10 group members who worked all over campus.

Once the content was done, it was mounted onto Blackboard with the help of staff from the university's Center for Classroom Technology (CCT) which administers Blackboard for the university.

Beta testing lasted for four weeks. Students, faculty, teaching assistants, and librarians were invited via email, posters, and phone calls, to comment on the content and layout

of the tutorial. Additionally the group demonstrated the tutorials to organizations on campus, for example - the Student Government Association. The group collected and documented this feedback so it could be incorporated in the web version.

The revised tutorial was then advertised to all faculty for use in their classes. As well, testing and revising of the tutorial continues and users are encouraged to send in comments.

The group collaborated with CCT once again to transfer the tutorial from Blackboard to the web. The stand alone web version offers easier navigation of the content, and the site is also accessible to those users not on Blackboard. While the web version is the final end product of the group, again it is constantly revised based on user feedback.

When: The entire process took 1 and a half years.

### Case Study Three – Chemical Scavenger Hunt

I recognize that the case presented here is not revolutionary, and not new – but what *is* different is that this is in the sciences, *and* was initiated by the TAs. Most likely this occurred because they were beginning to think like instructors, and they had a burgeoning personal interest in pedagogy.

Who: TAs and Professor for first year course, and the branch librarian.

What and Why: Create a lab and an accompanying assignment that would get students into the library, using print and electronic information resources early in the semester, to help them learn how to gather the information they need to use in their labs for the rest of the semester. The Idea is that students will become self-sufficient users of the library and won't have to rely on the unreliable and often unavailable information, found or not found, using Google. This would hopefully mean less questions during the semester from students to their TAs, the professor and the librarian – through the doing of the

assignment the students will have had practice, and gotten credit for, finding the information themselves.

How – The TAs approached the professor with their idea of adding a library session into the course. Together they contacted the librarian and presented her (me) with their ideas. We all wanted the students go from “I looked on Google and it wasn’t there”, to actually finding the information they needed in resources that were valid and reliable.

The librarian was very enthusiastic about the idea, but reminded the TAs and professor that the assignment would have to be meaningful, relevant, and that the students would need to get credit for it. Also, it would have to happen during regular class time and the TAs would have to be present for the in library lab. After much discussion, the design of the scavenger hunt was:

1 – the librarian would have one lab session, early in the semester, to teach a how-to session for each lab section. As there were 39 lab sections the plan was for the librarian to teach two sections at a time – in the library, multiple times a day over 5 days. The students would then have a week to complete the assignment, which would be turned in, during their next lab to their lab TA, who would grade them. Granted, this presented a large challenge to the librarian, however, she felt that it was worth it, to get the mostly first year students into the library and learning how to find things on their own would be invaluable.

2 – the assignment was called a scavenger hunt as each student would be given a chemical (that they would be using at sometime during the year), and they would have to find various bits of information about that chemical using a variety of resources. These bits of information included chemical and physical properties, safety data, common names, definitions and uses of, as well as a recent article on, and a book in the library that mentioned their chemical. Also, the students had to do a Google search on their chemical and report on what they found. Finally, they were to tell us who they worked with on the assignment: a fellow student, a TA, the professor, the librarian or other library staff. We wanted to encourage them to work together and to ask for help.

3 – The make-up of the scavenger hunt worksheet, as well as the accompanying resource guide in print and on the web, was drafted by the librarian, and then shared with the Professor and TAs for feedback/edits/and changes. The final version contained ideas from all of them. As well, it has since been modified every semester based on feedback from students, TAs, the professor, and the librarian.

When – Initial contact took place at the end of a spring semester. The planning, design and scheduling took place over the summer, and the first scavenger hunt lab took place in the third week of the fall semester 3 years ago.

Part 2 – discussion

What do you think? I am interested in hearing from you all why these were (or were not) successful?

Questions to consider:

**Why did these people collaborate?**

*From the Discussion:*

- *They were able to identify clear issues*
- *Workload eased/shared*
- *Common objectives*
- *2 heads are better than one*
- *Need driven with concrete goals*

My thoughts (in case no one offers up any):

I have thought a lot about this, and I CONTINUE to think about it and I am not sure I have it quite right yet.

If it's quiet -



I think for one NEED drives collaboration. There has to be a reason to do it beyond just that of – let’s work together on something. There has to be need, and it has to be recognized by all the collaborators to be a need.

Next. It has to fit into the professional goals and values of all partners. They have to have a vested interest in seeing the project through to the end – and recognize that the end-product could not be reached without the help and expertise of those beyond their own profession.

**How did they work together (or not) to get things done?**

*From the Discussion:*

- *Self administration of collaborative process*
- *They valued all contributions and trusted in the validity of their differences*
- *Facilitating the process*
- *Included the whole food chain as members*

My thoughts (in case no one offers up any):

Working with the stakeholders throughout the process and making changes based on feedback their feedback. Lots of listening, and building into the process lots of modification and feedback-gathering opportunities.

Team – based working. Meaning fluidity on who the leader is at any given moment. Lots of respect and trust and most important – FLEXIBILITY!

**What specific attributes and/or activities did they have or do that helped ensure their success? There is overlap with the previous question.**

*From the Discussion:*

- *Flexible*
- *Flexibility balanced with focus makes magic*
- *Willingness to share control*
- *Not about “my way” instead it’s “our way”*
- *Collaborate early to save time*

- *Enrich understanding through multi-perspective*
- *Lots of expertise*

My thoughts (in case no one offers up any):

Strong communication and networking skills.

Lots of finding non-jargony ways to describe things because they crossed the boundaries of their respective professions and, as we are well aware, the language is different for each one.

Lots of initiative, and good time-management skills.

There is a willingness to try and try again – reassess, and change as needed.

Willing to work beyond what is normally expected – and making the time to do so, often because there is a perceived pay-off later on.

So What IS COLLABORATION?

*From the Discussion:*

- *Working together, not top down*
- *Peer to peer*
- *Common: benefits, goals, interests, needs – works through facilitation*
- *Finding solutions*
- *Creating stuff*
- *Greater than the sum*
- *Voluntary - not for personal BUT professional gain*
- *Or not!*
- *A symbiotic relationship*
- *Lack of ulterior motives*
- *The best collaboration isn't mandated*
- *Enthusiasm will change the attitude of the group*