Libraries conduct 2 year assessment project

Formal and informal, internal and external, all feedback goes into improving services

In spring 2010 and spring 2011, the College Libraries ran IRB-approved campus-wide user satisfaction surveys with assistance from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. These formal surveys collected responses from more than 400 users each year, providing data on user satisfaction with and perceived importance of the full range of Libraries’ services.

Jenica Rogers, Director of Libraries, and Keith Compeau, Associate Director for Library Operations, have also engaged in informal on-the-spot opinion polling about the College Libraries, encouraging students to share their thoughts and complaints in the Crumb Library lobby.

We have learned a great deal from all this data, and have implemented immediate responses to some issues (working with CTS to fix wireless problems in spring 2011) and are developing planned responses to others (facilities comfort and study hours are at the top of student concerns). The Libraries’ report on this two year assessment project will be published on the Libraries’ website during the fall 2011 semester.

Points of Pride

90% of respondents indicated that the helpfulness and/or friendliness of staff is Very or Somewhat Important, and 90% of respondents indicated that they are Very or Mostly Satisfied with the helpfulness and/or friendliness of the College Libraries’ staff.

We value nothing so much as providing a friendly, helpful service to the College community, and we will do our best to keep up the good work!
The College Archives reopens, sets public hours

After a semester-long closure beginning in January of 2011, we are pleased to announce that the College Archives and Special Collections are reopening for research, coursework, and internships effective fall semester 2011. College Archivist Matt Francis and Librarian Emerita Jane Subramanian will be available to assist researchers, faculty, and students as appropriate.

For the 2011 fall semester, the SUNY Potsdam College Archives & Special Collections will be open to the public on Mondays from 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM, and on Thursdays from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM. Additionally, researchers are welcome to schedule appointments with the college archivist for times outside of the public hours.

It is our hope that as faculty work with students on primary source research related to the College, personal research projects related to Crane’s 125th, alumni weekends, or the upcoming bicentennial, these public hours and research appointments will allow us to best help you access the College’s history.

If you have questions or requests for the archives, please feel free to contact Matt or Jane via email or at x3326.

For additional information, see the College Archives and Special Collections website: http://potsdam.libguides.com/archives

Welcoming Matt Francis

In August 2011 the College Libraries welcomed Matt Francis as College Archivist. As Archivist, Matt will be responsible for the administration of the College Archives & Special Collections, shepherding forward its collections, research services, and student learning opportunities.

Francis comes to SUNY Potsdam from the American Heritage Center of the University of Wyoming where he spent the past three years as an assistant archivist in the arrangement and description department. He earned his B.A. in history from Bluffton University, and a M.A. in public history from Wright State University.

Jane Subramanian Retires

Librarian Jane Subramanian, MLS, has officially retired after 36 years of service to the College and the Libraries in many capacities. An alumna of the College, in recent years Jane focused her skill and expertise on the College Archives and Special Collections. These collections, which represent the history of the College and the region, are used by outside researchers, our dedicated alumni, the College administration, and faculty and students. Through hard work, dedication, and love for the College Jane has laid the groundwork for an impressive collection of the College's history and created a hands-on teaching workshop. We are lucky that she has chosen to stay on part-time until Spring 2012, and will miss her greatly when she escapes into full retirement.
Quantitative research on Information Literacy instruction

IL instruction changes student research behavior for the better

A recent study of citation patterns in papers was conducted at Florida Gulf Coast University. This review of work done in 8 sections of first-year composition compared papers written by students in courses which received no explicit IL instruction and papers written by students who had information literacy instruction as part of their coursework. The study, published in the American Library Association publication College & Research Libraries, showed that instruction in information literacy skills improved the quality of materials cited by students and broadened the scope of their research.

The full article and results are available at http://crl.acrl.org/content/72/4/332.full.pdf+html.

Some highlights of the findings:

1. Students who had IL instruction cited an average of 5.3 sources in their papers, compared to 3.2 sources from un-instructed students.

2. Students who did not receive IL instruction cited their textbook or class materials as a source in 11.8% of citations. Students taught research skills cited the textbook 0 times.

3. Students receiving instruction cited books (rather than articles, websites, or course texts) four times more often than their counterparts.

We can help you make the same difference in your students’ work.

Information Literacy: We think they already know it. We’re wrong.

A new anthropological study of students at five Illinois colleges, publication forthcoming from the press of the American Library Association (http://www.erialproject.org/publications/ala-project/), has given us new insights into something many of us have long suspected: Our students are ill-prepared to do research at the college level. Inside Higher Education published a lengthy piece on the study on August 22nd, 2011, including the following observation:

[researchers] said they were surprised by “the extent to which students appeared to lack even some of the most basic information literacy skills that we assumed they would have mastered in high school.” Even students who were high achievers in high school suffered from these deficiencies, Asher told Inside Higher Ed in an interview.

In other words: Today’s college students might have grown up with the language of the information age, but they do not necessarily know the grammar.

[“What Students Don’t Know, Steve Kolowich, Inside Higher Ed, August 22, 2011. Available at: http://tinyurl.com/iheart_article]

The article notes that students are often overwhelmed, frustrated, confused or anxious when approaching research, and suggests that the assumptions of librarians and faculty may not be helping: the article notes that “both professors and librarians are liable to project an idealistic view of the research process onto students who often are not willing or able to fulfill it.”

There are no easy solutions to Information Literacy challenges, but the librarians at the College Libraries want to help. If you are interested in integrating information literacy learning objectives, librarian guest lectures, or assignment revisions into your courses, please contact Carol Franck at franckcr@potsdam.edu or x3310.
In January 2012, the Libraries will launch a new website

Senior Assistant Librarian Patrick Patterson, MLS, MIS, is the College Libraries’ Web Services Librarian, and since he arrived at SUNY Potsdam in summer of 2010 he has been researching, testing, and developing a new website for the College Libraries. The well-documented process (follow along at http://www.patrickrunfit.com/potsdamlibweb/) will result in a streamlined site built around user feedback about how college students and faculty approach, search for, and use information. We are testing prototypes to ensure the new site is an intuitive tool for students at all levels of information literacy, making sense to the first-year student who has never set foot in our libraries as well as our dedicated senior seminar students and undergraduate researchers. We know that our faculty are also important website users, and our new site will be a more effective tool to assist them in planning syllabi, guiding students through smart research processes, scheduling information literacy support, and beginning their own research.

Look for it in Spring Semester ’12.
We think you’ll like it.

Library Liaisons Luncheon
Please Join Us!

Who: Faculty Liaisons to the Libraries, Crane’s Library Advisory Committee, Department Chairs, and Librarians

When: September 30, 11:30-1:00  Lunch served at noon; come for part or for all!

Where: Thatcher Hall, 2nd Floor

Why: To hear updates and join in discussion about the College Libraries work, including budgets, collection building and collection weeding, and information literacy work, and to share a meal and conversation with your colleagues

Lunch provided; please RSVP to Angie Donah, x2482, by September 26.