K-16 Collaboration:

A Quantitative Study of Collaborations on Information Literacy in Georgia

Laurie Aycock

Valdosta State University
K-16 COLLABORATION

Abstract

Information literacy skills are a crucial part of the LIS field. As the amount of available information continues to increase, it is important for students to have the skills necessary to evaluate sources so that they can choose the ones best suited to their needs. An emerging trend is collaboration between academic librarians and high school media specialists and teachers to develop instruction sessions that will help prepare high school students for college research. The purpose of this study is to answer questions about these partnerships in Georgia: how many exist, where they are located, how long they have been in existence and what common models are being used. The author will develop an online survey of open- and close-ended questions. During the fall of 2011, the link to the survey will be emailed to instruction librarians at schools in the USG system and media specialists in Georgia public high schools. The survey link will also be submitted to the GLA and GLMA listservs. The responses received from the surveys will be tabulated to show the current state of university-high school collaborations in Georgia.
K-16 COLLABORATION

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Introduction

As the amount of information available continues to grow, it is more important now than ever to have an information literate society. The ability to find and evaluate useful information is a skill that many first-year college students were not taught in high school. As a result, these students are not adequately prepared for college level research (Foster, 2006). In order to bridge the gap between K-12 and college, several states have initiated K-16 or P-16 programs to align standards and ensure that students are college-ready when they graduate from high school. Georgia P-16 initiatives began in 1995 when Governor Zell Miller signed an executive order setting up regional P-16 councils. Since that time, many programs, such as early college and dual enrollment, have been implemented (Rochford, 2007). Collaborations between academic librarians and school media specialists to provide information literacy skills fits within this framework by not only preparing students for college level research skills, but also preparing them to be lifelong learners. This exploratory study seeks to determine the number and types of such collaborations in Georgia.

Literature Review

Many articles have been written on the subject of IL collaborations between high school and academic librarians. These articles show that such collaborations vary in the format in which they are carried out.

Fuson and Rushing (2009), academic librarians at Belmont University in Tennessee, describe an outreach program called “Library Conversations@Belmont.” The academic librarians who taught instruction session to freshman noted how weak the students’ research
K-16 COLLABORATION

skills were. They decided to hold events once a semester in order to build relationships with local school librarians. The academic librarians shared their observations of the freshmen’s weakness with information literacy skills and also shared the typical requirements of a freshman research paper. Their goal was to help the school librarians use this information to begin, or to strengthen, information literacy skills at their school. The forums were very successful, with a growing number of participants at each succeeding meeting.

Librarians from Kent State University have also formed partnerships with K-12 librarians and teachers, as well as provided outreach programs for local high school students. (Burhanna & Jensen, 2006). KSU librarians began communicating with school media specialists through email lists and organizational meetings. As dialogues continued, a professional network was formed which allowed for the development of outreach to high school students. KSU librarians work with school media specialists to set up instruction sessions in which the high school students come to the university library. The librarians have also developed web-based instructional videos featuring college students which teach information literacy concepts and an assessment tool designed to be used by school media specialists.

Academic librarians at University of Montana’s Mansfield Library provide outreach to high school students by conducting instruction sessions for the students. Zoeller and Potter (2010) surveyed school media specialists at local high schools in order to gather more information about information literacy instruction practices and resources at the schools, the media specialists’ opinions about the level of student information literacy competency, and whether or not the media specialists were aware of the university’s outreach programs. They found that there were many correlations between practices at the high schools and the university, including the need to educate faculty about information literacy practices. Suggestions provided
K-16 COLLABORATION

by the media specialists led the university librarians to make some changes to their high school outreach programs and their first-year program.

Hull and Taylor (2003), librarians at Georgia State University, co-taught a course for students in the Masters of Library Media program. The students were taught the different types of reference sources and how to use these resources. They also had to observe and write about transactions at a reference desk, develop a specialized reference collection, and, as a group project, teach a library instruction session. The librarians reported many positive outcomes of this project. It allowed for collaborations on three different levels: between academic librarians, between two academic departments and between two workplaces – K-12 schools & the university library. The benefit of most consequence was the students’ understanding of the information literacy skills that first-year college students are expected to have and their role as future school library media specialists in teaching those skills.

Definitions

According to the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) (2011), information literacy (IL) is “the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information.”

ACRL (2011) defines collaboration as “Two or more partners bringing different strengths and perspectives to a task with shared goals, a shared vision, and a climate of trust and respect.”

K-16 collaborations are partnerships between colleges and high schools with the goal of ensuring that students are ready for college. In this study, the focus is on collaborations between academic librarians and media specialists or teachers at public high schools.
Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this exploratory study is to quantify the number, types and locations of K-16 collaborations between K-12 media specialists & teachers and academic librarians in Georgia to teach information literacy skills.

The objective of the study is to identify as many of these partnerships in Georgia as possible and develop a typology of the K-16 collaborations that exist.

Research Question

K-16 collaborations on information literacy exist throughout the country, but aggregate information about the number and types of these programs in Georgia is not known. The primary research question driving this study is: What are the number and types of collaborations for information literacy between university libraries and public high schools in Georgia?

Methodology

The author will develop an online survey of open- and close-ended questions, using SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com). During the fall of 2011, the link to the survey will be emailed to instruction librarians at schools in the University System of Georgia and media specialists in Georgia public high schools. The survey link will also be submitted to the Georgia Library Association (GLA) and the Georgia Library GLMA listservs. In order to establish the state of K-16 IL collaborations in Georgia, it will be important to survey as many librarians and media specialists as possible.

Since live subjects will be contacted for information, the researcher will seek Human Subjects permission from the Institutional Review Board at Valdosta State University. Informed consent will be obtained by the inclusion of a statement at the beginning of the survey instrument and participants will have the option to agree to participate.
K-16 COLLABORATION

The survey will contain questions about work setting, job title, participation in collaborations and the type of collaboration. Some questions will be close-ended. For example:

“What is your job title?

- Academic librarian
- Media specialist
- Other”

Questions about the type of collaboration will be open-ended to allow for responses that describe how the collaboration was set up and implemented. For example:

“Have you ever been involved in a collaboration to teach information literacy skills spanning across K-6 or 7-12 and college settings? If yes, please describe this project in detail.”

Data Collection and Analysis

The survey will be available through SurveyMonkey for six weeks. SurveyMonkey collects the responses that are received and allows the survey creator to view and to generate reports. The site also provides enhanced SSL encryption to ensure the security of the responses.

After the six week survey period, collected data will be downloaded into a spreadsheet to allow for analysis of the responses. Totals will be obtained of the number of academic librarians who respond, the number of media specialists who respond and the total number of collaborations that are reported. These totals will also be subdivided by geographic regions of the state to provide details about the numbers of collaborations per region.

Content analysis will be done on the descriptions given for the types of collaboration in which the respondents are involved. Responses with similar characteristics will be grouped. In
K-16 COLLABORATION

this way, different types of collaborations can be identified thereby creating a typology of the IL collaborations that exist in Georgia.

Conclusion

A study of this type can provide valuable information to librarians who are interested in forming partnerships to provide information literacy instruction to high school students. If information about the types and locations of K-16 partnerships is quantified, tabulated and made available to information professionals in Georgia, a more cohesive approach to partnerships might be developed. Instead of only having programs scattered throughout the state, a regional system could possibly be developed so that eventually all school systems will be served. Another possible outcome of describing the types of models already in use is that other librarians wishing to form collaborative partnerships will not have to “reinvent the wheel.” They can choose a model that works for their school and modify it as needed. These partnerships could be of great value to universities as they seek to improve their retention, progression and graduation (RPG) rates. If students enter college prepared to do college-level research, they may be more likely to stay in school and graduate. Further research could be done to determine if that is true.
References


