

Katelyn Handler and Lauren Hays

Librarians as faculty developers

Leading educational development initiatives

Faculty development might not immediately spring to mind as a role for librarians. It's not something that we're taught how to do in graduate school, and it's easy enough to be swallowed up by all of the traditional day-to-day demands of academic librarianship. However, we have had the opportunity to work with and alongside faculty development departments at our institutions. From this work, we realized how much we enjoy it and how well it fits with many of the things we already do as librarians. It is our hope that other librarians will start to see connections between the work of librarians and the work of faculty developers, and be more willing to pursue this as a part of their larger presence at their institutions.

As we started exploring the connection between librarians and faculty developers, we began reviewing the literature. From that review we learned that Shannon Fay Johnson and Ludwika Goodson found that at times librarians felt in competition with faculty development centers, but concurrently, there were many areas where collaboration can benefit institutions.¹

The primary area that both librarians and faculty developers saw for collaboration was in the area of "information literacy guidelines and workshops for faculty."² One specific example of this type of collaboration was when Christy Moran created a course on information literacy hosted by Broward College's Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning.³ This example extends the idea of collaboration for librarian involvement to librarian leadership in collaborative proj-

ects. This extension of collaboration outside the classroom into other models of faculty development, such as through librarian-led communities of practice (CoP), can lead to wider integration of information literacy and related outcomes into institutional curricula while also promoting librarians as peer educators among their faculty cohort.

CoP differ from one-off workshops in that they promote sustained discourse on a given topic. According to Marijke Hezemans and Magda Ritzen, a CoP is a meeting of individuals who share an interest in a topic or theme, with the members of group shaping the goals.⁴ In committing to the creation of a CoP, librarians involved will require a greater commitment of their time and energy than singular workshops, which can be challenging, particularly at smaller institutions where librarians are likely already tasked with a variety of responsibilities. However, librarian-led CoPs are wonderful opportunities to explore areas of teaching and learning that might not be as readily addressed by academics from other disciplines. It can also be personally rewarding to explore topics over an extended period time with colleagues from a variety of backgrounds with shared interests. Although information literacy is a natural fit for librar-

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ians to take the lead in faculty development initiatives, there are other options, depending on your interests and involvement.

At both Park and MidAmerica Nazarene universities, our development initiatives took the form of CoPs, which represented a unique opportunity to influence the faculty conversation on our selected topics. In this article, we share our experiences with developing CoPs and working with faculty development, and then share what we learned from our experiences, with the goal of encouraging more librarians to try their hands at this method of faculty development.

Katelyn's view: The challenges of starting and sustaining a CoP

My involvement with faculty development programming began as a natural outgrowth of work with Park University's Faculty Center for Innovation (FCI). In spring 2017, FCI sought to expand its programming, and one of these initiatives was the Faculty Fellows program. The program was predicated on the idea of the annual selection through a blind peer-review application process of a group of faculty members to each lead a CoP over the course of the academic year. My CoP sought to examine information literacy instruction through the lens of learner-centered pedagogy, requiring an introduction of both core concepts along with literature and findings that married the two.

The CoPs were heavily discussion-focused, and though the meeting itself was only an hour long, preparation for the meeting along with follow-up contact in order to increase participant interaction and interest in the group meant that the Fellows's role required a significant time commitment on top of normal librarian duties.

There were a number of challenges associated with leading a CoP.

- *Planning and pedagogy.* One of the challenges of being a part of the introductory class of Faculty Fellows was that participants were unsure how to approach planning the monthly CoP meetings. Ultimately, a joint decision was made by the Fellows to plan each

meeting as a discrete unit. Although there were overarching themes that connected the meetings throughout the course of the year, participants need not have attended previous meetings. A flipped classroom model was appealing for the purposes of having more time for activities and discussion within the meeting, but ultimately this pedagogical approach was set aside as to not create a barrier for faculty attendance. When considering the creation and structure of a CoP, you don't want to provide an excuse not to attend the meeting for any faculty who might have gotten busy and had mixed feelings about their attendance.

- *Measuring success.* Another challenge of this program was figuring out the best way to assess faculty learning through their participation in the CoPs. Surveys were created in consultation with the FCI staff, whittling down the initial survey over concerns of survey length. Despite this, faculty were reluctant to complete the surveys and participation was very low. One idea for those pursuing faculty development in this manner might be to switch to a different manner of soliciting feedback, such as through the Classroom Assessment Technique model of minute papers or muddiest point to capture participant thoughts.

- *"Don't take it personal."* It can be hard not to take it personally when you prepare a well-developed program that ends up being sparsely attended. It is important to remember, though, that the number of participants is not the only metric by which to measure success. In my case, a program was implemented to allow for digital badging of participants, which would not only recognize involvement with the CoP, but can also help give the leader of the CoP a better sense of how those involved valued their time. If faculty take the time to claim a badge, it shows a stronger interest in the topic, and the number of badges claimed can help with assessment following the programming.

With the challenges outlined above, it might cause librarians to question the value of involvement in such an endeavour, par-

ticularly when faced with numerous demands on their time. However, I found the rewards far outweighed the costs. I found value in:

- *Librarians as peers.* Yvonne Nalani Meulemans and Allison Carr emphasized that an “information literacy instruction as a service” model by librarians results in the perpetuation of an uneven relationship between those in and outside the library confines.⁵ One of the advantages of librarian-led faculty development is that it allows librarians to direct the conversation and move from beyond the roles of service provider to that of a peer with other faculty. Not only do the faculty involved gain greater insight into the chosen topic, but it lays the groundwork for future librarian-faculty collaboration.

- *Motivation for exploration.* It can be challenging to justify spending much time on new areas of professional interest, particularly when you are not sure how this exploration might tie into previously established responsibilities. Leading a CoP provides an avenue for scholarly exploration into a topic with others who share a similar interest. This can result in exciting new possibilities for future professional activities, and can help keep both your scholarship and practice interesting and fresh.

Lauren’s view: Lessons learned from two different CoP experiences

I have been on the Faculty Development Committee at my university since 2014. During the 2016–17 academic year, I had the opportunity to lead a CoP on games and learning stemming from grant work I completed. Then, during the 2017–18 academic year, I led a series of six sessions on critical thinking.

Based on my experiences leading the Games and Learning CoP, the next year I adjusted the following:

- *Timing of meetings.* The Games and Learning CoP was a group of faculty who signed up and made a commitment to be involved for the year. I tried to accommodate the faculty’s time preferences, so the meetings were organized using a Doodle

poll. However, changing class schedules and responsibilities made it difficult to get the entire group together. Therefore, when I led the series on critical thinking, I decided to set the times of the sessions and opened them to anyone who could attend and was interested. This change in strategy led to a consistently higher turnout at each of the sessions.

- *Presentation of content.* During the games and learning CoP, I tried to present content and lead a discussion. This strategy proved minimally effective. Therefore, in the critical thinking series, I changed strategies and presented minimal content and asked many questions of the faculty. Asking questions instead of sharing content created space for robust conversation that continued after the sessions ended.

- *Goal of meetings.* The university’s Faculty Development Committee, tasked the Games and Learning CoP with creating a best practices list of how to use games in educational settings. A specific end product was not required from the sessions on critical thinking. Instead, attendees were able to share and discuss more freely. Freedom of conversation and project choice allowed for richer dialogue, and I would advocate for this freedom in future CoPs.

From both the Games and Learning CoP and the critical thinking series I learned:

- *Ask questions.* When leading faculty development initiatives, it is often better to ask questions and facilitate rather than present information. While this should not be surprising with what we know of teaching and learning strategies, I was surprised at the extent faculty wanted to talk about their teaching.

- *Listen.* The critical thinking series was developed because faculty indicated on a survey that they wanted to help their students improve in that area. If possible, create CoPs based on an expressed need or interest.

- *Librarians can be educational developers.* As others have stated, librarians are uniquely situated on university campuses
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Enabling Programs and Services: Publications

- Appointed Wendi Arant Kaspar to a second three-year term as editor of *College & Research Libraries*, with a term of July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2022.
- Approved the “ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in Special Collections.”

- Approved the “Characteristics of Programs of Information Literacy that Illustrate Best Practices.”

Enabling Programs and Services: Operations

- Confirmed the virtual votes approving the minutes of the ACRL Board meetings at the 2018 ALA Annual Conference and the minutes of the virtual ACRL Board of Directors Fall Meeting held on November 16, 2018.

- Approved the following disbursements from the ACRL Friends Advancement Fund in FY20:
 - \$7,000 to fund an additional ALA Spectrum Scholarship sponsorship, and
 - \$13,000 to support additional free training opportunities for Project Outcome for Academic Libraries. ¶¶

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because they work across departments and often see the big picture of teaching and learning at their institution. This can translate into librarians having expertise in teaching and learning topics of interest to faculty.

- *Librarians have expertise faculty appreciate.* Information literacy, open educational resources, media literacy, technology, copyright—these are some of the subjects where librarians have expertise. Librarians should own this expertise because other people see value in it.

Librarian-led CoPs have the potential to redirect important discussions already occurring on many college campuses, and both of us engaged in unique faculty development CoPs at our respective institutions. It allowed us to set the tone for faculty conversation on important topics related to teaching and learning, while providing an avenue for extended exploration of professional interests. Despite the differences in our topics and approach, we discovered much commonality in our experiences and believe these experiences may translate well to other institutional

contexts. For those interested in a proactive relationship with the faculty at their institution, faculty development by librarians represents an exciting next step.

Notes

1. Shannon Fay Johnson, and Ludwika Goodson, “Faculty Development Centers and Libraries: United We Stand, Divided We Fall,” *ARL 2015 Proceedings*, 258–63.
2. *Ibid*, 261.
3. Cristy Moran, “IL for Faculty: Partnership with College-wide Professional Development Departments,” Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy 30, <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/gaintlit/2018/2018/30>.
4. Marijke Hezemans and Magda Ritzen, “Communities of practice in higher education,” *Information and Communication Technologies and Real-Life Learning*, (Springer: Boston 2005): 39–46.
5. Yvonne Nalani Meulemans and Allison Carr, “Not at your service: building genuine faculty-librarian partnerships,” *Reference Services Review* 41, no. 1 (2013): 80–90. ¶¶