Effective liaison relationships in an academic library

By Connie Wu, Michael Bowman, Judy Gardner, Robert G. Sewell, and Myoung Chung Wilson

Recommendations of the Rutgers University Libraries Task Force on Liaison Relationships

Knowing the context in which an academic library operates and conveying what informational resources and services a library can offer to its varied constituencies are keys to the success of a library as a fully integrated part of the academic enterprise. The interaction that is required to bring about this success is often referred to as the "liaison relationship."

Following is a revised text of recommendations for subject selectors and library liaisons submitted by the Task Force on Liaison Relationships of the Rutgers University Libraries. The Task Force was appointed in May 1991 by then vice-president for information services and university librarian Joanne Euster. A "toolbox" of suggested methods to implement each recommendation is included.

I. Contact appropriate academic departments and review channels of communication once a year.

- Contact faculty in a way that fits with their departmental culture and your own personal communication style.
- Communicate via e-mail, memos, telephone calls, or face-to-face contact. Visit faculty in their offices; ask department heads about problems and program changes; talk with deans, chairs, liaisons, and secretaries. Take advantage of informal occasions to talk with faculty, such as working lunches, coffee breaks, and department or university parties and receptions.
- Attend faculty departmental meetings when appropriate and ask to be placed on departmental mailing lists.
- Produce inexpensive house organs such as newsletters, electronic mailings, or faculty library handbooks. Keep them brief, informal, and newsy.
- Encourage department chairs and academic administrators to recognize the importance of the liaison relationship and to call on you as a resource person.
- Attend general cultural and social events and seminars with faculty.
- Provide a comprehensive list of selectors by subject in all library units to faculty and academic administrators. Make the list available on the campuswide information system. Inform faculty that libraries work together as a system, not independently of one another.
- Recognize faculty members when they publish a book with a note congratulating them and informing them that a copy has been received in the library.
- Teach classes on the use of the library, library automation, research methods, and online searching. Encourage faculty to share responsibility for teaching library use to students.
- Offer library instruction to faculty and graduate students on new resources and services available. Conduct open houses for new faculty and graduate students.
- Seek opportunities for collaborative teaching projects, research, and grants with faculty.

(Liaison cont. on page 303)

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prints dating from the 16th century, greatly extends the university's holdings in this area. The purchase was funded by the UNLV Foundation, the College of Hotel Administration, and the Library's Endowments.

Materials relating to the Los Angeles riots of 1992 are being archived at the **University of Southern California's** Doheny Memorial Library by librarian Anthony Anderson. The material includes the Christopher Commission Report of 1991, along with 67 boxes of materials relating to the commission's investigation of the Los Angeles Police Department following the 1991 beating of motorist Rodney King. Also included are the Webster Commission archives, 58 boxes of materials on the city's handling of the riots, plus more than 40 additional reports, books, and related government and privately printed documents. The collection even includes transcripts of sermons given from Los Angeles pulpits following the riots. ■

(Liaison cont. from page 254)

- Participate in university orientation programs for teaching assistants, research assistants, and international and graduate students. Train students who assist faculty with their research.
- Provide current bibliographic services for special research needs such as Selected Dissemination Information, table of contents, and current awareness services.

II. Integrate the faculty into all stages of the collection development process.

- Advise faculty about how they can participate in the selection process.
- Ensure faculty are aware of the library collection's strengths and weaknesses. Compile and distribute appropriate journal lists, new acquisitions lists, and library research handbooks and topic guides when appropriate.
- Inform faculty about budgetary and allocation issues.
- Encourage faculty to participate in decisions on materials acquisition, retrospective purchasing, conversion of materials into other formats, and replacement of missing materials. Obtain advice from departmental liaisons on the acquisition of expensive titles. Send information on newly published journal titles to appropriate faculty for purchase evaluation.
- Consult with departmental liaisons and other appropriate faculty on cancellation and evaluation of serials originally recommended by them or in their subject area. Keep faculty informed throughout the cancellation process.

III. Become familiar with the curriculum, reading requirements of undergraduate students, thesis topics of graduate students, and the research interests of faculty.

- Obtain information about academic priorities within departments. Supplement data from catalogs and other institutional sources with information obtained from questionnaires.
- Develop a standardized form to gather information about the department(s) for which you are responsible. The form may include items such as: 1) faculty size, 2) size of student population: undergraduate and graduate students, 3) new programs, 4) new courses, 5) new faculty members, 6) new research interests, 7) new research centers or labs.
- Develop a standardized questionnaire form to gather information about individual faculty. Use the questionnaire to set up profiles of faculty research interests. The following items may be included: 1) professional subject interests, 2) current research projects, 3) courses being taught, 4) other responsibilities, 5) foreign languages read, 6) academic rank.

IV. Develop subject expertise and keep current in your fields.

- Attend lectures and symposia.
- Read current works in your field.
- Talk to faculty about research, teaching, and service activities.

V. Cooperate with other librarians and library units in liaison relationships.

- Share information with subject specialists and public services librarians with responsibilities in similar academic areas.
- Regularly communicate with subject specialists working in overlapping or interdisciplinary areas.
- Exchange information with librarians involved in user education and bibliographic instruction.
- Bring users' comments or suggestions about library online information systems and concerns on library technical issues to technical services librarians.
- Elicit the support of library administrators in stressing the importance of liaison relationships. ■