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MBAs and the ACRL Framework: Introducing Graduate Business Students to ASU Library

Background

In the summer of 2018, liaison librarians from Arizona State University (ASU) Library met with the directors of the full-time MBA program at the W.P. Carey School of Business to explore the possibility of launching a library orientation during the first week of the program. We discussed various formats and methods, with the objective of delivering key information in a way that would be engaging, interesting, and memorable.

The W.P. Carey School is one of the largest and most innovative business schools in the U.S. The School's "Forward Focus" MBA curriculum is constantly re-evaluated to meet the needs of employers. The School attracts some of the most creative and energetic students by offering a full scholarship to every MBA applicant admitted. As a result, ASU Library has placed a priority on engagement with the W.P. Carey School's graduate programs.

Workshop Design

During the initial meeting with Carey School administrators, we decided that the best format would be a combination of lecture and lab, with a decided emphasis upon the latter. Students would work in small teams following our quick introduction, and the vast majority of the allocated time would be dedicated to active, rather than passive, learning. Over the next few months we further developed a plan and coordinated with the MBA office on logistics.

We began designing the workshop with the *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education* (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2016) in mind. All six Frames were

considered within the context of the orientation. The two frames that were most relevant to our orientation program are highlighted below.

Information has Value. We engaged with our students, challenging them to critically evaluate the kind of information they could find in the ASU Library business research databases, while also investigating information found freely online. Our emphasis was on the products and publishers, and understanding the importance of evaluating information as a commodity. This led to a discussion of how business information can be used and the principles behind the creation and dissemination of proprietary business information. We also included a discussion on copyright in the classroom and the importance of proper citation and attribution in graduate school, and the carryover of these principles into the business world.

Research as Inquiry. Our orientation exercise was designed to force the student teams to synthesize and analyze large pockets of information, draw conclusions, and create recommendations based on a collaborative investigative process. Students had varying levels of comfort with the debate and dialogue around knowledge, depending on their background. There was not one clear path to the "answer," and the process illustrated that better decisions can happen if multiple voices are shared during information gathering and assessment.

Lecture

In August, we conducted two simultaneous workshops with 50 students, one librarian, and one representative of the business school in each room.

Students created teams of 9-10 and each team chose a name. We were scheduled early in the students' orientation week and were encouraged by W.P. Carey staff to create a workshop that emphasized teamwork and camaraderie among the new cohort.

Our agenda called for a brief outline of the Library's homepage, print and electronic collections, and an introduction to our discovery tool, ASU Library One Search. We highlighted key services such as chat reference and the LibGuide that serves as the key portal to all business databases. Trivia and fun facts about ASU Library were sprinkled throughout the lecture.

Next, we moved to a LibGuide designed to lead students through the active learning portion of the workshop. The Workshop LibGuide provided assignment instructions and introduced three business research databases and their application to the assignment.

To vary the pace and tone of the workshop, we took a surprise game break. We used Kahoot! (<https://kahoot.com/>) to test the students' memory of the trivia we had casually tossed out during the lecture section. This energized the teams and kindled their competitive spirit. Teams then selected their research topics, with the highest Kahoot! scores earning first choice.

Lab

We seized the opportunity to introduce the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) by instructing each team to choose an industry from IBISWorld's NAICS-based US Industry Report Collection. Student teams were required to research and deliver a five minute slide presentation addressing the drivers of the industry in terms of economics and demographics; market size and growth rate; and competitive landscape. Another component of the assignment challenged the teams to use the Cities module of Passport to discuss the feasibility of locating a business from their chosen industry in a United States metropolitan area. The primary resources for their research were IBISWorld, Passport, and ABI/INFORM. Teams were also encouraged to assess the relevance of publicly-available government data and industry association sites. The assignment and links to ASU Library research products were provided on the Workshop LibGuide referenced above.

Time management was a key factor as the teams transitioned from the research phase to preparing presentations using web-based Google Slides, chosen for ease of collaboration. Presentations were required to include a Works Cited slide and utilize in-text citations as necessary. At the conclusion of each presentation, constructive feedback was offered by the librarian and W.P. Carey staff members.

Outcome

An informal survey at the end of the session showed that the students were enthusiastic about the workshop, with a few saying it was their favorite learning activity of the entire orientation week. The majority greatly enjoyed the intense nature of the research and presentation requirements of the workshop, with a minority reporting some stress due to time constraints. It was also clear from the feedback that in future presentations we could specify the use of Microsoft PowerPoint, since they were using it already in other parts of their orientation program. We also received favorable comments from the MBA program directors, and we look forward to future workshops of this nature.

Reference

Association of College & Research Libraries. (2016). *Framework for information literacy for higher education*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>