

Great Expectations: The Information Literacy Gap Between Faculty and Students: A Literature Review

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Abstract: Through a comprehensive literature review on information literacy and information seeking behaviour, I have found there is a gap between faculty and student expectations for research. Student strategies for finding information are often fundamentally different than those employed by faculty.

Implications of the Gap: First, it can lead to improper and inefficient search strategies on the part of students. Second, faculty members can have unrealistic expectations regarding the information literacy skills of students.

Faculty

Information Seeking Behaviour

- Scholars begin with an extensive body of knowledge and a professional network.
- Scholars welcome serendipitous research. Confidence to “wander into uncharted territories of knowledge.”²
- Information seeking skills demonstrate their proficiency with the paradigms and methodologies of their discipline.

Perceptions & Expectations

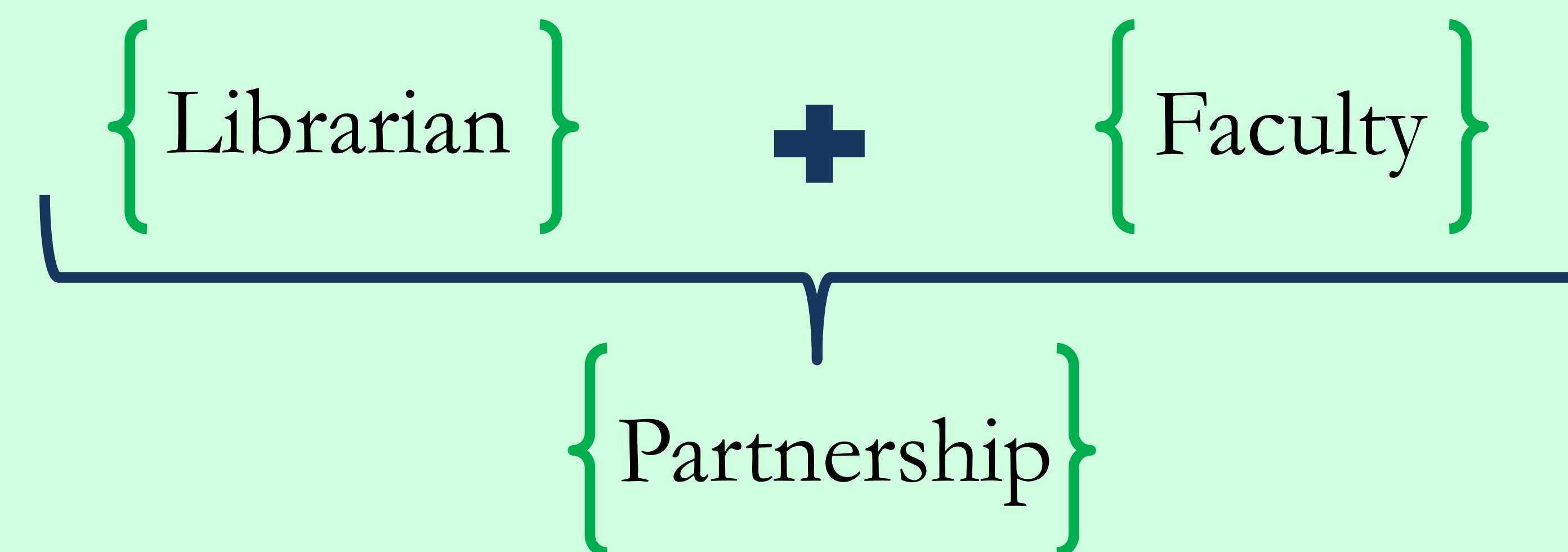
- Research assignments are a opportunity for students to be enthusiastic about a topic, innovative and combine research and individuals interests.

The research process should be a meaningful experience for students, not simply a means to get a grade.

- Professors have undefined learning goals for assignments.
- When evaluating research, other criteria beyond those given to students are used, such as evidence of commitment to the assignment or “legitimate effort.”
- Faculty members have indicated having an opinion on what a students should be able to do and expect them to fully engage with research tasks.

The Gap: The Role of the Librarian

- Through user instruction in research, students can obtain the skills to coherently formulate a research problem, translate it into a focused topic and evaluate the credibility and usefulness of resources.



- A collaborative effort made between librarians and faculty can help reduce the gap between faculty and student research expectations.
- “Librarians can be a bridge in helping students understand WPW.” – Valentine, 2007, p. 114.
- There are more opportunities for librarians to holistically view the social and academic aspects of students’ lives than teaching faculty have.
- Remove traditional barriers between libraries and academic departments to effectively educate students on research strategies and information literacy.
- Create more effective information literacy sessions to specifically address assignment guidelines and expectations.

Students

Information Seeking Behaviour

- Studies show students have preferences for the path of least resistance for finding information: the “quick and dirty” search, familiar resources, and personal networks.
- Students can be enthusiastic for particular research topics, but time and workload often prevent them from maximizing the research experience.
- Research causes anxiety due to the amount of time it takes, which is usually more than what students prepare for.

Students often concentrate on their perception of What the Professor Wants (WPW) when beginning the research process.

Perceptions & Expectations

- For students, WPW is the objective criteria of the assignments: page count, bibliographic format and types of resources.
- A student’s concept of “legitimate effort” varied according to the interpretation of WPW.
- In the end, many students accept lower grades and blame themselves for not budgeting time accordingly.
- However, students will also blame the professor for having unclear guidelines or could otherwise not discern WPW.