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Open Sourcing Ideas: Sharing and Recreating a Library Instruction Program

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Overture: We've Got a Theory

In April 2014 at the ACRL Conference in Indianapolis, IN, Lisa Hinchliffe, Lori Freeman, Adrienne Lai, and Alex Whitende presented a panel entitled, "Long-tail Theory: Sharing Ideas Across Libraries." The presentation was in which they highlighted examples of non-traditional marketing to academic libraries at Claremont, the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Mount Holyoke, and North Carolina State University. The panelists freely shared their marketing strategies and encouraged the audience to adapt the ideas to their institutions, saying that they hoped that attendees would "do it with ease for you." One of the ideas shared was a book thermal scanner that saved the developed with colleagues Chelsea Gabbard and Jessica Kelly-Thompson, which I had first seen in an unscripted discussion at the conference. Later, from the opposite coasts, we've joined forces here to discuss the development of the idea, the implementation of the instruction, and the importance of sharing ideas among academic library instruction.

Recreating such others' ideas is common in our field, and it is a practice that is well-supported by professional ethics. Although the "sweat" such other's work entails (and yields) (with proper credit, of course), remains proprietary, the advantages of using a colleague's idea, and then incorporating it probably always outweigh the disadvantages. The information literacy needs of most academic libraries are similar, and, relatedly, and, even roughly the same in that they come to college with little information literacy skills, and, relatedly, and, even roughly the same in that they need the benefit of information resources, and lost overshadowed by the competing resources (i.e. Fortune, Inter, Amino, citations) of their smartphones. Even accounting for the differences between our institutions, we (librarians) can adapt events that were successful elsewhere to fit our own unique communities, saving time, reducing the amount of trial and error, and ultimately, making our instruction programs better for our students by sharing successful attempts at "remaking" such the professional community.

In our experience, everyone benefits more if the first group of adopters shares their "how-to" and "what-to" methods and modes of learning about "remakes" (show professional literature, conference presentations, the Web, and social of models. Tweakers like TNDMS and Pinterest, Instructables, Thingiverse, Instructables, Makeshare, and Infinitude all facilitate this type of sharing. Here case is the ability to provide public feedback on the implementation of the original idea. Feedback is a different venue and how it was adapted. Ideas can be more actively create an open- source mindset around instructional development? We hope this post is a step in that direction.

Going Through the Motions

Creating the Event at Mount Holyoke College

Alice At Mount Holyoke College, we hatched the idea for our book thermal scanner during a brainstorming session with the library could provide a workshop on citing sources during fall 2013 conversation. The planning process involved Chelsea Gabbard, Jessica Kelly-Thompson, and me. We's Green Lily Gabbard. Thomas Tel-Mi strongly that orientation, when new students are overwhelmed with getting their bearings, meeting new friends, and struggling to stay afloat of the information flood, is not the ideal time to teach students about the resources in their library. Instead, we agreed that we appreciated that the Dean of Students Office turned to the library with this request, and we felt that we could offer other ways to address this clearly identified need.

Historically we haven't had great success with drop-in workshops in the library, and we know we wanted to try something different. We felt that the idea of a book thermal scanner was a fun, and, we hoped, attractive. For the greatest impact, we wanted to reach them at the point in the semester when they were thinking about their bibliographies. We hoped our "use - a- workshop" would encourage students to think about citing and engaging. At Mount Holyoke, the sweet path to engaging students usually involves food, and thus the "workshop" was scheduled for a Friday afternoon in the department head, he was skeptical, a fun drop-in citation help event? Persuaded by our enthusiasm, he fortunately agreed to support our modest budget of five for food. As we figured out the details, we ran the idea by our colleagues in the Dean of Students Office, Student Engaging, and Writing. Initially, the Dean of Students agreed to join the effort, helping to advertise and staff the event.

Student admiring the ALCTTNG Food workshop at Mount Holyoke

One of the central ideas for ALCTTNG (taking the recipes for each snack provided, we used the snacks themselves to illustrate different citation styles, and we selected snacks to showcase a range of recipe sources. Mount Holyoke is a liberal arts school, and Mount Holyoke College has a strong sense of tradition, and everyone on campus knows about Mary Lyon, the institution's founder. Lyon's famous dietary regimen, which she developed to promote health and prevent illness, was based on Graham crackers, honey, and, for gingerbread, a variation on her molasses cake. This was the inspiration for our ALCTTNG Food.

M. Lyon, ca. 1845, Mokenan Cake with Plum, unpublished manuscript, Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections, South Hadley, MA.

After that, we got a little carried away with pitching snacks that had a connection to MHC: the infamous "Chef Jeff" cookies from Dining Services, caramel corn from the Campus Store, and Mount Holyoke Snickers cake in-store. We even wrote to the President's office asking for a recipe, she graciously replied but extraordinarily our intention, sending a favorite recipe. Because, New York Times, of, etc. were with a recipe for Mount Holyoke College President's Cake. (Wolfgang, personal communication, Nov. 16, 2013)

Image for the Mount Holyoke ALCTTNG Food event

We chose to have ALCTTNG Food run twelve before exams, when many students were in the thick of working on their bibliographies. We worked with our student interns, peers, and personal contacts from Seminar faculty asking them to encourage their students to attend, SAM Centers writing mentors, who are current students, distributed flyers and helped spread the word. We also, in the spirit of collaboration, invited students in the library actively, and, in the spirit of collaboration, invited students in the library actively, and, in the spirit of collaboration, invited students in the library actively, and